CULTIVATE YOURSELF

FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION

D^R M. H. J. SCHOENMAEKERS.

v.2.0

CULTIVATE YOURSELF.

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CULTIVATE YOURSELF

NON-SECTARIAN REFLECTIONS ON PEOPLE AND SOCIETY BY DR. M. H. J. SCHOENMAEKERS

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PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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It may sound old-fashioned, but it is nevertheless true that, upon the appearance of this second edition, I feel a deep need to publicly express my gratitude for the favorable reception that *Cultivate Yourself* has received, both from the press and the public. I am still fortunately old-fashioned enough to love my readers.

To the Catholic critic who claims that I have never understood Thomistic theodicy, I strongly recommend giving serious thought to the great difference between a philosopher who "reasons out" God's omnipresence and a mystic who "tastes" the divine in everything.

M. S.

CONTENTS.

PAG.

INNER MORALITY. 1

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM 21

MONASTIC VIRTUES 37

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 60

MILITARISM 95

ANARCHISM. 111

CAPITALISM. 129

SEXUAL ETHICS. 137

AFTERWORD.. 145

1

INNER MORALITY.

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A completely unbiased person does not exist. Before we examine any opinion, before we form a judgment about a person or an action, we already hold at least one personal conviction that sets us apart from others—personal in the sense that it has become intertwined with our very being, so much so that it has become one with ourselves, entirely and inseparably. We cannot think without it. To let go of such a conviction would mean a fundamental change in our entire personality.

Some of these convictions are true, some false. Some are the result of independent observation and thinking, others come from trust in predecessors and teachers. But these convictions exist and cannot simply be reasoned away. They can only fade over time.

How much I regret having often lost sight of this in the past. How often have I tried to argue against such deeply held convictions, "from person to person," "from

common sense to common sense," starting from general truths that all people know and accept. But it never yielded the desired result for me. True, I sometimes cornered my opponents; true, they often admitted that they had no argument against my reasoning—but still, they would not abandon their own conviction. And they would not because they could not.

No, they could not. These personal convictions had become, in fact, part of the individuals themselves who held them. They are much more solid, much more stubborn than general, impersonal certainties about “universal truths that everyone knows and honors.” A truly devout, dogma-bound Catholic will, for the sake of his personally unwavering belief in the Holy Trinity, reject a fundamental mathematical truth and stubbornly maintain that of the three divine persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each is God individually, and yet there exists only one God; for the sake of his dogma on "transubstantiation," which tells him: "In every consecrated host, Jesus is present in both divinity and humanity, with flesh and blood," he will continue to assert that one and the same Jesus is truly and substantially present in a thousand

places at once. If that Catholic is a simple believer, he will appeal to the teachings of the Church, in which he places full trust. If he is a learned theologian, he will, in addition, attempt—through the most subtle reasoning—to explain away the apparent contradiction between dogma and mathematics. But he will not abandon his own conviction for the sake of "general truths that all people know and honor." And he will not do so because he cannot go ahead and reason against his dogmas—clearly, logically, simply. Present him with "irrefutable" evidence, arguments, and documents, as authentic as a real banknote, as clear as the sun—he will not understand you. He will call you wicked or foolish. And he will do so because he cannot do otherwise. If he allows himself to be "convinced" by you, then he was never truly a dogma-faithful Catholic to begin with.

I mentioned the Catholic as an example. But what I said about him applies to anyone who holds a truly personal conviction—whether that conviction is religious, scientific, or artistic. Dr. Van Eeden [1] once spoke in "De Geelvinck" about the "class struggle" and argued very clearly—in terms understandable to the intellect of any ordinary worker—that

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1 **Frederik Willem van Eeden** (1860–1932) was a Dutch writer, psychiatrist, and social reformer. He was one of the most influential intellectuals in the Netherlands at the turn of the 20th century, known for his involvement in literature, psychology, social utopianism, and spiritual movements.

the class struggle preached by the social democrats stands in contradiction to the pursuit of universal human brotherhood. A worker entered the debate. He tried, briefly, to "reason." This clearly did not succeed, and then he exclaimed—with admirable certainty and determination: "And still I say: class struggle, class struggle, class struggle." The man clearly held a truly personal conviction. He could not let it be taken from him, because he could not stop being who he was.

Once more: how much I regret that I did not see this clearly in the past. That is why I will now, first of all, state as clearly as possible the personal conviction from which I proceed in this study. If, after carefully reading this first chapter, you find yourself in agreement with me—read on. But if you already hold a personal conviction that directly contradicts mine as presented in this very first chapter, then do not read further, because you will not understand me anyway.

So here, then, is my deepest personal conviction—a conviction I have discovered within myself through much suffering and struggle, and which I may rightly call a true conviction, because I know that it

has withstood the test of reality within me and around me unshakably.

People, regarding their concepts of moral good and evil, are divided into two great parties:

1. The party of *external* morality. — This party says: "This is how I must live and no other way because external things, such as the laws of a personal, supernatural God, the Bible, or 'morals,' require it so and no other way." The reason and feeling in living people must submit to the laws of God, the Bible, and morals outside of the living person.

2. The party of *internal* morality. — This party asserts: "This is how I must live and no other way, because this is what the human reason, reasoning consistently, desires; this is what the finest part of the human heart wants." No moral authority exists outside the knowledge of human reason and the beauty of the human heart.

It goes without saying that one cannot draw a sharp dividing line between these two parties. There are people who are very inward in their moral views; there are also people who are very outward in their moral concepts. But between these two extremes lie as many shades as between pure white and pure black. However, that does not negate my view

that these consistent — or nearly consistent — extremes do exist, and that the various shades in between belong more to one side or the other depending on whether the inner element is stronger than the outer, or vice versa. It can also happen that one and the same person is inwardly moral in one area (for example, in sexual matters) and adheres to external morality in another (for example, in matters concerning private property). But only the two extremes are consistent, and anyone who does not want to contradict themselves must align with one of these two poles.

The party of external morality is the most visible in human society. It is organized into groups and subgroups, governed by leaders and teachers, official and unofficial authorities of all kinds. It obeys priests who proclaim and interpret God’s supernatural commandments; spiritual leaders, recognized as "experts" in the science of ethics and religion; civil authorities who enforce morals as codified in legal systems; and party leaders who primarily uphold “principle” and “program.”

The party of internal morality is sanctioned by no external power or professional

authority. And yet, it lives—and where it lives most powerfully, it is entirely invisible to "the world," like seeds growing hidden in the dark womb of the earth. The people who belong to this party try to meet each other—not because they are united by some outward organization, but solely because they love one another.

I profess, as consistently as possible, my allegiance to the party of inner morality, for the simple reason that I can only seek saving power in truth, and because truth can only be known through a person's own reason, felt in their own heart, and enacted in their own deeds. This reason is simple—for me, and for all who are able to understand me.

That all human beings, in all their thinking, striving, and working, seek happiness is an unshakable law of nature. Supporters of an external morality may therefore tell us what our happiness has to do with whether our actions are called good or evil by outside sources. But if it is true that everything has value to a human being only insofar as it makes them happy, then everything is good that truly makes us happy, and everything is bad that truly makes us unhappy. Good is

synonymous with holy, and holy means bringing salvation or happiness. If a devout believer points us to a God who punishes certain thoughts and actions and rewards others, then the best possible answer we can give is that a "holy"—that is, salvation-bringing, happiness-bringing—God can be pleased with nothing more than our happiness, and therefore He must approve of everything that makes us truly happy.

It is truly heartening that inner morality is increasingly gaining ground, while outer "respectability-morality" or "legality" or "churchliness," or whatever one wants to call it, is increasingly being pushed aside. It is very encouraging that moralists are becoming less and less concerned with external institutions and more and more focused on studying the human being—the human being as they are inwardly and inevitably must become. That is encouraging, because all social injustices are consequences of inner human emotional drives, for example, greed, envy, hatred, desire for power, laziness. Capitalism would not produce unhappy proletarians if there were no greedy capitalists and no lazy workers. Authority would not produce slaves if there were no tyrants hungry for power and no envious subjects.

Yet there are very few who seek the blessing

and the curse of humanity entirely in the innermost part of human beings. "Inner morality" is not a system. It is nothing more than the firm, vivid conviction that true moral goodness and wickedness lie solely in the deepest part of the human heart. Everything that lies outside the human heart—purpose, actions, words—is in itself neither good nor evil. All of that becomes good only when it is sanctified by a good motive; it is only evil when it is desecrated by a bad motive.

There are few people in whom this conviction has become flesh and blood—few who dare to apply it in all its consequences. For the sake of clarity, I have often referred to inner morality as the morality of *intentions*, the morality of *motives*. A human expression has various causes. But the deepest cause—the one that permeates it entirely, that gives it its true character, that makes it sacred or profane—lies in the innermost part of the human heart. That cause is the motive, the intention, the driving force from which the action, the word, or any human expression arises. [1] If that driving force is inherently good,

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1 One must distinguish between *the goal* of an action and *the intention*, or motive, or driving force. The *goal* answers the question: For what purpose is this action performed? (for example, for money or fame). The *intention* or motive answers the question: *From what* does this action arise? (for example, from love, from hatred, from envy, from compassion).

sacred, life-giving, then the expression must also be good, sacred, and life-giving. However, if the driving force is inherently bad, then the expression must likewise be bad; I say "*inherently*." Naturally, it can happen that a well-intentioned act turns out badly, or that a poorly-intentioned act turns out well. But *inherently*, that is, *in its deepest essence*, a well-intentioned act is always good, and a poorly-intentioned act is always bad; and the *moral* value of an action lies precisely in its deepest essence—*not* in its outward expression or in its consequences.

Now this is as clear and evidently true to me as the simplest mathematical truth. I sometimes marvel that I couldn't see it as easily before as I do now. And if I did not know from my own personal experience just how incredibly difficult it is to free oneself, in one's moral understanding, from all imposing outward appearances, I would be inclined to call anyone who disagrees with my simple "morality of intentions" a hypocrite. The development of my inner life, however,

has taught me that the illusion of outward appearances is almost impossible to overcome. The church in which we were raised, the tradition passed on to us by our parents at birth, or some social "movement" of our time in which we, for whatever reason, participate—actively or passively—usually influence us so strongly that it becomes nearly impossible to imagine ourselves, even for a single moment, entirely apart from that church, that tradition, that "movement," and then to be wholly ourselves.

Social “movements” perhaps influence us even more strongly than churches or traditions. I know of no social movement in our country that so powerfully and, at the same time, so ethically protests against the sanctity of churches and traditions as the so-called “Christian Anarchism.” And yet, the spokespersons of Christian Anarchism cannot be consistently inwardly moral.

Recently, an eminent Christian Anarchist, Felix Ortt, wrote an article titled "Love and Marriage" in the journal "Vrede-tijdschrift". [1] In it, I read, among other things:

"In general, we may say that our conscience can be completely at peace with an action only when both the motive behind the action and the

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1 "Peace Magazine", 1st Year, No. 4.

action itself are as noble, as pure, and as worthy of human dignity as possible.

If either the motive or the action falls short, then our conscience will remain unsatisfied. This is true both when we commit an inherently unworthy or low act from a noble motive, and when the act itself is good, but the motive is not.

For example, when we support a poor family—an act that is inherently good because it contributes to the happiness of others—but we do it for our own benefit, our delicate conscience will still sense that the act is inferior or wrong. Or when we kill a violent man with the noblest of intentions, then—even if our reason tells us we did the right thing—something will continue to trouble our conscience: namely, the inhumanity of taking another human's life. We will repeatedly be forced to ask ourselves whether the desired good could not have been achieved by a permitted, morally acceptable means."

I only want to briefly point out the contradiction that exists in a mind that says, "we did the right thing," and at the same time must constantly "consider" (and surely that "considering" is also an act of that same mind!) "whether the desired good could not have been achieved

by permissible means." That contradiction, found in an earnest man like Felix Ortt, [1] is for me yet another indication that logical thinking is hindered in a most troubling way not only by church and tradition, but also by a "movement." More important, however, is the external conception of morality contained in Ortt's words. The Christian-anarchist movement, along with Ortt, has reached the point of no longer leaving the decision about moral good and evil to church or secular authority. It has indeed penetrated the veil of convention. Why, then, does it not also penetrate the veils of words and deeds, in order to seek human worth behind all human expressions—in the rich inner life of the human being, in the very sources of human existence?

Ortt still speaks of actions that are "in themselves" good—that is, independent of their motive, and of actions that are "in themselves" evil. That concept of morality remains *external* (for the act is also *external*; only the motive is *internal*) and therefore fails to recognize what is *lasting* in moral goodness and evil. An act passes, a motive endures—and it endures all the more the deeper and more powerfully it operates within the heart. An act is a *phenomenon*, an *occurrence*; a motive is a *force* which,

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1 **Felix Ortt** (1866-1959) was a Dutch engineer and proponent of Christian anarchism, non-violence, and animal welfare.

like all forces, grows stronger through being put into action. An act, as such, can therefore only be *transiently* good—that is, useful—or *transiently* bad—that is, harmful. But it is not an inner and therefore *enduring source* of happiness or misery. And that is precisely what we seek in morality: lasting sources of *joy* or *suffering*, *blessing* or *curse*—not mere incidents of temporary benefit or harm. Temporary benefit or harm can come from anything. It can be connected to noble or base motives, but it might just as well result from winning the lottery or catching a cholera bacterium—things that have very little to do with morality. But moral goodness is good—and remains good despite all incidental outcomes. Moral goodness is not a passing utility, but a living *blessing*. And moral evil is evil—and remains evil, despite all incidental outcomes. Moral evil is not a passing misfortune, but a living *curse*.

That blessing and that curse can only be found in *forces*—not in incidents, not in actions—in human forces that operate in the depths of the human heart and grow through their very activity. Supporting a poor family is, in itself, neither good nor bad, because it is merely a passing

act, and therefore can only be *useful* or *harmful*, but not a *blessing* or a *curse*. In the example that Ortt uses, the act is useful for the household, but morally bad, because it stems from a bad motive. Killing a person is, in itself, neither good nor bad, again because it is merely a passing act, and therefore can only be *useful* or *harmful*, but not a *blessing* or a *curse*. In Ortt's example, the act is harmful to the violent person, but morally good because it arises from a good motive.

Whoever clearly understands this will grasp the moral, absolute truth of the often-quoted saying: A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

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Whoever speaks of enduring things cannot say anything essentially new. But is not that which endures more worthy of discussion than that which passes away?

I know that in my “morality of intentions” I say nothing essentially new. The protest against external morality is as old as humanity itself. The history of that protest is the history of

what is most human in humanity: morality and religion. That protest is the truly human, moral-religious life resisting dead worship of form. Whoever sends that eternal protest into the world anew, from heart to heart, is the one—and the only one—who contributes to the enduring growth of human happiness. He does not begin a new work, for his work is the eternal, the only holy work of all noble human beings. He reinterprets, once again, in the words and images of his own heart and time, the living and immortal natural language of the prophets.

Israel groaned under a dry legalism and dry scripturalism. It was locked within the narrow circle of its own people; in hopeless shortsightedness, it looked down with contempt on all who had not received the official right to call themselves Israelites—either by physical birth or by outward ceremonies. That was the petrification of external morality.

But how wonderful it is to see that the most beautiful expressions of human life again and again break through those dead legal and scriptural dogmas. Even within Israel, prophets rise up time and again who protest against all formalism, and worship what is holiest and noblest—their God and their All—in the human mind and heart. Those prophets are revolutionaries,

revolutionaries in the true and consistent sense of the word—revolutionaries in the world of ideas. "A new covenant I make with the house of Israel," says Yahweh. "I will put my law *within them* and write it *on their hearts*. Then they shall no longer teach each other, saying: 'Know Yahweh!' For they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest." (Jeremiah) "The commandments that I, Yahweh, give you are not too high; they are not beyond your reach. They are not in heaven, so that you would have to say: 'Who will ascend into heaven for us to bring them down, so we may hear them and observe them?' They are not across the sea, so that you would have to say: 'Who will cross the sea for us to bring them back and let us hear them, that we may observe them?' No, my word is very near to you—it is in your mouth and in your heart, so you may live by it." (Deuteronomy)

Thus have the defenders of inner morality spoken since the earliest times, in spite of the spiritual authorities who attempt to impose an external morality. But Pharisaism also continues to exert its petrifying influence. Israel remained largely bound to dead legalism. Jesus, therefore, had to fight the same battle that the old prophets

had fought. All his sermons were again different forms of that one eternal protest against external moral authority. “The Kingdom of God is within you,” “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth.” Yet even his Christianity was besieged by the undying death-idea of Pharisaism. Soon, it was deformed into an external religion of authority in the Roman Church. Protestantism attempted a prophetic effort to restore the inner conscience to its sovereignty over against external religious authority. But that attempt failed due to a lack of consistency. For the pioneers of the renewed Protestant Christianity still clung to an external, absolute rule: the Bible. However, the spirit that inspired Luther when he dared to say, “Here I stand, I can do no other,” was a prophetic spirit—that is, a sacred power from the realm of the hidden, inner world in which the causes of the present and therefore also the causes of the future reside. And those who can and dare to be consistently guided by that prophetic spirit will not merely protest against a Roman Pope—no, they will break with *al*l external moral authority, *all* dogmas, *all* imposed forms, in order to

seek human goodness and wickedness solely in the motives of a person's own, deeply personal heart.

The one prophetic spirit that inspired both Jeremiah, Jesus, and Luther is immortal. It also lives in our time and expresses itself with unprecedented universality. In all social classes and ranks, in both private and public life, in science and art, in religion and morality, the life-liberating idea breaks through: “People, free yourselves from the chains of external moral authority, turn inward, worship your highest salvation there, recognize there the true source of your suffering!” But Pharisaism is not idle either. It influences not only the “conservatives,” but also penetrates into the most “progressive” parties, and continues to cause life-giving intentions to petrify into superficial party politics, to corrupt pure motives into petty ambition and base pursuit of success.

Many a young noble soul perishes because they were lured by noble-sounding slogans into the nets of conscious and unconscious deceivers.

Love for youthful, sincere enthusiasm is one of the motives that urges me to publish this study. I want to warn, once again, that not everything “progressive” is inwardly true, even if it appears so outwardly. It is so appealing to the strong,

honest youth to fight for Truth and Justice! But, young friends, do not be impressed by generalities. Let us calmly ask ourselves, in detail:

- against which old institutions today's struggle "for Truth and Justice" is directed;
- which *false* motives have desecrated those old institutions;
- with which *noble* motives an honest and earnest person must be inspired in opposing them;
- what must be done to weaken the harmful motives in the old institutions, and to strengthen the noble motives from which a better society will grow.

I will speak to you calmly, clearly, and simply. I do not ask you to agree with me. I only ask that you think seriously along with me, and then judge for yourself to what extent I have seen rightly, and to what extent I have been mistaken.

More than superficial judges of people might like, I will speak about myself. Not about personal incidents, which have no right to demand your attention, but about the deepest depths of my heart. I will do so in the conviction that, in their innermost essence, all human hearts are one.

21

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

I cannot imagine that there is a single thinking person on earth who does not, from time to time, feel the truth of the morality of motives in their heart. In our best moments, don't we all feel moral appreciation—that is, a deep, sincere respect—for anyone driven by good intentions, regardless of where those good intentions lead them? And don't we also feel *moral* disdain — that is, a deep, sincere contempt — for anyone driven by bad intentions, regardless of the deeds, even dazzling deeds, that may result from those bad intentions?

But I do not speak to those who glimpse this truth only *from time to time*. I speak to people in whom the morality of motives has at least *begun* to become one with their personality.

I hope, reader, that you are one of those people.

Then you will cultivate yourself into splendid fruitfulness.

And the first seedling that will grow within you is called: *the urge for freedom*. You will want freedom—freedom first and foremost from those chains that can touch not only your outward actions but also the innermost core of your entire being; chains that can encompass your very thinking and feeling, namely religious customs, institutions, and dogmas. You will strive for religious freedom, both for yourself and for others. And perhaps you rejoice that today's struggle "for Truth and Justice" often stands sharply opposed to religion. Perhaps you want to extend a brotherly hand to all who wish to root out religion from people's hearts. —Perhaps the following ideas about religious freedom will shed some light for you. Speaking of religion, I will limit myself to Christianity, since Christianity remains *the* religion for us Westerners.

Two things are often forgotten by "fighters" for freedom:

1. that every growing being needs bonds in order to grow.

2. that it wants to break *those* very bonds itself when it no longer needs them.

A chick inside the egg absolutely needs the eggshell

in order to grow; and when its time has come, it breaks the shell itself.

A caterpillar absolutely needs its cocoon in order to grow into a butterfly; and once it has become a butterfly, it tears open its own covering.

A fetus needs the mother's body in order to become a child; and once it is a fully developed child, it feels within itself the urge to open the mother's body so it can live in the free air. All the doctor may do is help the child follow its own urge for liberation.

Whoever "frees" a chick from the eggshell too early, kills the chick.

Whoever tears open a caterpillar's cocoon before it has naturally become a butterfly, kills the caterpillar.

Whoever exposes a fetus to the open air before it is fully developed, kills the fetus.

The indication of whether a bond is still necessary for the natural growth of a living being lies in the striving of the being itself. The chick has no urge to be freed from the eggshell before it truly becomes a hindrance

to its growth. The caterpillar does not want to tear open its cocoon before it is a butterfly. The fetus does not want to leave the mother's body before it is fully developed.

Naturally necessary bonds for the moral development of many, many people are religious ones—in this case, the doctrines of the Christian faith. That these bonds are *truly* necessary for them is proven by the fact that they *want* these bonds, that they hold them dear. It is premature to try to "liberate" such people from their religious institutions, their mother body. They need these bonds, as long as they themselves do not wish to break them. These bonds contain spiritual nourishment that they must absorb. Break those bonds, and their moral nourishment will flow away like the contents of an egg from a broken shell, and the believer will wither morally for lack of sustenance. Only when the believer has fully absorbed the entire spiritual content of their church doctrine is he spiritually mature; only then should he be liberated—but then he will liberate himself or attempt to do so, sensing that he no longer needs his church's teachings, and that they even hinder his growth. The only thing

an outsider may do is *help* the believer follow their own desire for liberation—*help* them to distinguish the spiritual content of the dogmas from the forms to which the church, despite everything, insists on clinging. But it is a criminal desire to try to take away a believer's religious form before they have fully *understood* the natural spiritual truth hidden within that form.

Those who wish to promote the natural, healthy growth of human souls must constantly keep in mind the truth that a soul should be released from the bonds that enclose its thought and emotional life neither too early nor too late. The soul that emerges from its shell too soon will wither from lack of nourishment—the soul that remains in its shell longer than necessary will wither from lack of movement. Every *artificial* liberation must be avoided just as much as every *artificial* confinement.

A clear example of those who wish to artificially confine human souls—who, in other words, want to impose spiritual bonds on people that they no longer need—is *Voltaire*. See, for example, his "Philosophical Dictionary", entry: "Hell":

"As an illustration of this passage, I would like to offer a small admonition to those philosophers who boldly write in their works that there is no eternal hell. I say to them: Gentlemen, we do not live among Cicero, Atticus, Cato, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and the like… We are dealing with scoundrels who barely think; with a crowd of petty, brutish little people—drunkards and thieves. Go ahead and preach to that rabble that there is no hell; as for me, I will shout in their ears that they will be eternally damned if they steal from me…"

If they steal from me... See, that is *artificially* keeping people bound by restraints they no longer need for their spiritual growth. That is not serving the truth for the sake of truth—it is smothering the truth for the sake of personal gain.

The Voltaires of the world have not died out in our time. But they are not the only ones who sin against human freedom. On the other, equally misguided extreme, are *those* champions of liberty who want to strip away every religious dogma from everyone, indiscriminately. They rail against church and religion, against priests and believers, and with much scientific clamor argue that everything that has ever grown from religious soil must be nothing but weeds. Such people find all too eager listeners among

a superficial crowd that enjoys pretending to be somewhat learned. *These* preachers of freedom do not cultivate self-aware thinkers—they break the eggshell before the chick has absorbed all the nourishment inside. The nature of my position means that I sometimes speak about religion with former Catholics. I regret to say it, but it seems to me that relatively few among them have the right to truly call themselves *free* of their dogma. Many are arrogant fools who left their church *because they never understood it*, and because they considered themselves so vastly superior to all those 'stupid' monks and priests. No, I would much rather deal with the Catholic Thomas à Kempis. When he says to me: "Inquire willingly, and listen in silence to the words of the saints, and be not averse to the parables which the ancients used: for it was *not without reason* that they used those parables",—then I recognize in him the true reformer, who seeks the good in the old teachings in order to preserve it, and the evil in order to reject it. But when a twenty-year-old wants to bury the Catholic Church with a little book he hasn't even understood, I can't help but feel sorry for the poor soul. Consider

the simplest wildflower: it does not run away from the earth to be "free," but draws from the soil what it needs to live. That is the law of life for every healthy growth: *distinguish* between nourishing and non-nourishing elements, take in the nourishing ones, discard the non-nourishing —"assimilate" and "dis-assimilate."

I have already pointed out the inconsistency of orthodox Protestantism, which, although protesting against many expressions of religious authority, continued to cling to one absolutely binding external rule for all: the literal text of the Bible. But the main fault of Protestantism in its early expression was that it sinned against the law of life I just mentioned. I will not make myself ridiculous by claiming with great importance that I do not want to deny the merits of the Reformers of the 16th century—the greatness of those men will remain regardless of my appreciation or lack thereof. But now that Protestantism has a history full of lessons, one does not need to be a genius to observe that Protestantism in its youth preserved too little good from the old mother church. The forerunners of the Reformation understood the

law of life — assimilation and dissimilation — better than Luther. They did not *immediately* turn against the outward form of Christianity as it had developed over time, but sought the living core hidden within that form, which the church had neglected. They did not say: *change* your doctrine, but rather: *live* your doctrine!

Modern, liberal Protestantism is more consistent than the original orthodox form. It no longer clings to any single external, absolutely binding form—not even to the Bible—but sees in all forms of the entire creation (and thus also in the Bible) natural revelations of one living Truth. The horizon of modern Protestantism is therefore very, very broad. While the Catholic remains confined within the dogmas of the Church under the pressure of religious authority, and the orthodox Protestant continues to fixate on his Bible, the modern liberal Protestant observes all of nature with an open mind and knows that his God lives in everything and speaks to him through all things. To have broadened the religious horizon—that is the great merit of liberal Protestantism. But it seems to me that, in its zeal to eliminate every restriction on the religious perspective, it has gazed too much into wide, distant vistas.

Naturally, I am not advocating for new limitations on the religious outlook. Yet—even though it can at times be uplifting to stare into far-off skies and blue landscapes in the distance—what lies close to us lends itself far better to calm, careful examination and spiritual cultivation. That kind of careful examination has not been sufficiently realized within the liberal Protestant movement. Certainly, professors and preachers have deeply immersed themselves in highly detailed, highly "critical" analysis of historical facts and minutiae. But what they investigated failed to capture the interest of the congregation. It is, in fact, an open secret that liberal Christians often complain about the vagueness and lack of clear substance in the religious preaching of many of their ministers.

Whoever has once felt in their heart the living touch of the great ideas of Christianity will naturally regard with religious interest the clearly defined forms that have grown organically from Christian soil. Scholarly interest tends to focus on facts that are outwardly impressive or on subtleties that allow one specialist in the field the opportunity to make another specialist understand that the

latter has completely misunderstood something. But a deeply human, devout interest lives in every religious heart for that which is most naturally human—that is, for whatever has developed gradually, from its own inner vitality, from the very core of the human spirit, without any revolutionary shocks. And there is only one natural product that has arisen from the life of humanity fertilized by Jesus without the artificial, revolutionary interference of agitators. That one natural product is the religious life of the Catholic Church. It is true that Catholic institutions and dogmas have often been used by rulers in order to dominate. But the dogmas themselves, the institutions themselves, were for the most part brought into being by the religious desires of the Christian people—people whose inner spiritual development was not disturbed by revolutionary movements, but grew naturally and gradually. That is why the dogmas and institutions of the Catholic Church must be richest in the elements of Jesus' teaching. If God's Life was revealed so purely and powerfully in Jesus, if Jesus planted divine seeds in the hearts of men, then the fruits of those seeds must be sought in the aspirations of his sincere followers. And one of those aspirations came to expression in the fierce and heroic protest of conscience:

“Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me. Amen.” But many, many other aspirations are hidden within the dogmas and institutions of the Catholic Church. That Church is, for the Christian, the closest thing in relation to their religious life. Yet every form of life draws nourishment from its immediate surroundings. So, strip the Catholic religious forms of their external, lifeless “authority,” and you will find wonderful nourishment for the soul—right there, on your Western, Christian soil.

Considering the whole of Christian humanity as one moral individual—one Human Being who is constantly growing in understanding—I can envision the process of its spiritual development in 5 clearly distinguishable stages:

1. First, this Human Being believes in church authority and finds satisfaction in passive belief.

2. Then a stronger, personal inner life awakens within, which begins to protest against passive belief. He starts to criticize the Church. Still holding on to its religious authority, he seeks to distinguish a divine element from a human element in the Church's expression of authority. He says: The Church is indeed true in its divine teaching, but the people who officially carry that divine teaching are power-hungry and use the doctrine to rule over others.

3. His awakening inner life comes into conflict with church authority. Not yet far enough along in his spiritual development to *learn* from this conflict without becoming embittered—and thus blinded—he now resists everything that has been brought into being under the guidance of human religious authority. However, he is still unable to live a religious life without some form of authority, and so he turns solely to the officially sacred book of his church.

4. He begins to see that this officially sacred book, just like the old Church, contains both true (divine) and false (human) elements. In his religious life, he now rejects everything official—the official in the Bible just as much as the *official* in the Church—and begins to seek God's revelations in nature, in all the spontaneous, healthy developments of creation. Yet he forgets that nothing can exist completely detached from its immediate surroundings, and so he neglects to pay attention to *those* natural products that are most closely connected to his own religious life.

5. Now he perceives that his immediate, naturally evolved religious environment is his mother-church. He returns to that mother-church, determined—without growing embittered by the faults of those who rule

within it— to study the church as a *gradual product of nature*.

There are certainly more stages in the development of the Human Being's inner life, but these five are the only ones I have so far come to know through my own direct observation.

Liberal Protestantism, broadly speaking, is still in the fourth stage. *Generally* speaking, there are certainly ministers within modern Protestant congregations who try to raise their listeners to the fifth stage—for example, the eminent leader of the "Free Church," P. H. Hugenholz Jr. Liberal Protestantism can learn much from modern Theosophy—not because Theosophy is right in all its claims, but because its method of study and intentions correspond to the fifth stage of religious soul development.

Theosophy views religions as natural phenomena. From these natural phenomena, it seeks to extract what is best, most enduring, and innermost (the "esoteric"), and to offer that best and most enduring part to humanity so that people may absorb and process it in their minds and hearts. The Theosophist does not "oppose" any single religious form; rather, he "acknowledges the existence"

of every religious form that impresses him—in other words, every form that lies in the immediate proximity of his inner religious life. He searches within that form for the lasting, spiritual content and incorporates that into his heart and mind. He does not see Theosophy as a separate religion but, first and foremost, as a *science* of religion that gathers the results of centuries of religious *experience*. However, he is not content with "the science of religion" alone. He not only *learns* from religions—he *processes* what he has learned, internalizes it, and then judges all forms of human society from his own standpoint. For most Theosophists, that standpoint is a kind of intellectually tinged occultism. That not everyone is fond of this standpoint is understandable, and the dedicated Theosophist will not regret that in the least. After all, he must know that no one can truly process anything unless it is done in their own personal way. Whether physical or spiritual, processing is always a deeply personal matter—and it is spiritual assimilation, above all, that matters to the true Theosophist.

According to that theosophical method of study, I will subject Catholic life to a calm, freedom-based critique. Once again: Catholic *life*.

Not the diplomatic, sometimes theological power play of rulers within the Roman Church, but rather

1. the ideals of every devout Roman Catholic soul: the monastic virtues.

2. the spiritual aids that every faithful Catholic devoutly uses: the seven Sacraments.

Let us carefully distinguish, within those monastic virtues and Sacraments, the truths — and the good motivations connected to them — from the untruths and the harmful motivations linked to those. Then let each person process the truth they have perceived in their own mind, their own heart, and their own actions. Only then will they know to what extent the struggle "for Truth and Justice" may rightly condemn our religion, our concrete Christianity — and then they will, in truth, be religiously *free*.

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MONASTIC VIRTUES.

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The Catholic doctrine has always made a clear distinction between God's *commandments* and God's *counsels*. Whoever keeps God's commandments is righteous; whoever, in addition, follows God's counsels—the “evangelical counsels”—is not only righteous but also perfect, or at least strives for perfection by very special means. There are three "evangelical counsels": 1 voluntary poverty, 2 complete obedience, 3 lifelong chastity. These "evangelical counsels" are observed in the monastic orders. Young candidates for monastic life are first instructed for one or more years in these "evangelical counsels" and during this time also undergo their period of probation. Afterwards, they take a vow—either for a set period or for life—to strive for perfection through the observance of the "evangelical counsels."

The monastic virtues — poverty, obedience, and chastity — are therefore not, for the Catholic, a matter of legal righteousness, not simply doing what

one is “allowed” to do and avoiding what one is “not allowed” to do, but rather the ideals of a person who no longer asks what is permitted or forbidden, but strives in all things to attain the highest good. These ideals permeate the entire Catholic life. Almost every devout Catholic, in the prime of youthful vitality, feels drawn to the monastic life and spends sleepless nights in contemplation, wondering whether they are called to exchange the world with all its pleasures for the mysterious, mystical, and quiet happiness of the monk. It is often claimed that the motives driving young people to the monastery have nothing to do with noble idealism. People often say that cowardly fear of the struggle for existence, or a lazy aversion to hard work, or at most, the disillusionment of an unhappy love affair, leads these young people to break with the full natural life and retreat behind cloister walls to sink into a cowardly peace, sluggish idleness, or sentimental melancholy. But generally speaking, that is not true. Whoever has come to know the Roman Catholic Church not through books written by people outside of Catholic life, but by having actually seen and participated in that life, knows that it is not the dumbest, the most cowardly, the laziest, or the

most weakly sentimental boys and girls who most strongly long for the monastic life, but generally the strongest and most passionate among them. So there must also be a truth, a real holiness preached through that monastic life—a living truth that Catholic youth perhaps do not fully understand, but to which they are nevertheless unconsciously drawn, because it is a truth.

It is that truth, and that alone, which concerns us. That truth will provide us with a clear answer to the question that we must ask if our inner morality is truly our morality: What are the noble motivations that lead the better part of Catholic youth to look up to monks and nuns with reverence and a longing for happiness?

The first of the monastic virtues is "voluntary poverty." The monk takes a vow not to possess any personal, material property. All the material things he uses are the communal property of the monastery; nothing belongs to any private individual. Even the prayer book from which the monk recites his daily prayers is not his own. The superior of the monastery has full control over it and can order his subordinates to exchange their

prayer books. Yes, even the garment the monk wears is only lent to him as long as the superior allows it. The monk may not claim any material possession as "*mine*". This poverty is symbolized by the simple robe and the tonsured crown of the head. The male monk has part of his hair shaved off to show that he wishes to rid himself of all excess. For the same reason, the female nun covers her hair, one of a woman's adornments..

If we briefly put ourselves in the orthodox Catholic viewpoint, we can easily recognize the error that has crept into this voluntary poverty. For the Catholic, the highest Good is a *supernatural*, i.e.: *beyond-natural* God, whose existence can indeed be "proven" from the evidence nature offers us, but who nevertheless is not connected with nature, its essence, and its laws as one inseparable whole. God does provide proofs of His existence in nature, but He Himself remains *outside* nature, remains *super*natural. The motto for anyone who professes a supernaturalistic religion must therefore be: the further from nature, the closer to God. However, the devoted inner-moral person

cannot be supernaturalistic. He worships the highest, the noblest, within his own heart, and therefore he must see a fatal error in the orthodox concept of poverty, which in its strictest practitioners must lead to a bad motive: fear or avoidance of nature, and even hatred of nature.

But the young man who, in moments of selfless enthusiasm, believes he has discovered a calling to the monastic life in his heart, is not dreaming of a fear of nature. The young girl has never felt hatred toward nature, who—after a ball or a visit to the theater or a concert—lies awake in the dark of night with an empty heart and soul, pondering: Isn't there something better than the pleasure of being the "queen of the ball" or attracting the desirous glances of elegant young men?

No, they feel something else in their young, unspoiled hearts: *contempt for the world*—a deep *contempt for the world*—which speaks to them in poetic language from the coarse monk's habit and the simple nun's veil, *contempt for the world* that transforms their quiet bedroom into a solemn, consecrated monastic cell, where they can rest from all the hollow noise and superficial commotion outside.

Contempt for the world—that is truth, that is a good and noble motive. Oh, if only it were granted to me to help you feel the difference

between false fear of nature and sacred contempt for the world. True and beautiful is nature—the nature with its skies and stars, its mountains and valleys, its flowers and animals and people—but false is "the world," the official world of money, manners, and reputation, which pastes lies of propriety and empty power over the magnificent reality of human nature. Beautiful and true is naked nature; beautiful and true also is the human being as he emerged from the womb of nature. But humanity has come to forget its own natural beauty and now strives to appear as something other than it is. People exhaust themselves trying to replace their forgotten natural beauty with wealth, artificial respectability, or fame. That pursuit of fake beauty and false dignity—that colossal lie which pervades our entire society—is the "world" that Jesus despised with all his soul and of which he said: "I testify to you, that its works are evil." That is the world from which the first Christians withdrew, the world that fills every honest heart with revulsion. It is this noble contempt for the world that fills many young Catholic souls with reverence for the monk and the nun and urges them to take the vow of poverty. Unfortunately,

in the monasteries, what remains of contempt for the world is often only its symbol; the true sentiment itself has, under the influence of the supernatural principle of authority, degenerated into an unfortunate fear of nature. For us, this is all the more reason to try to see clearly what “the world” really is—so that we may truly and continually reject it, and through that rejection not flee from nature, but return to it.

I believe I can name the entire lie of the world that violates nature in just three words: *Money*, *Respectability*, *Honor*.

Money – Economists define money as a medium of exchange, and indeed, money is a means of exchange. But it is something else as well: it is power. Money is crystallized power. Because money is a commanding condition of life, the one who possesses it can force another, who lacks it, into their service. That is why money has become an inexhaustible source of falsehood.

We do not need to delve into learned economic theories to understand this. From the life of the world itself, we can constantly hear the very real and concrete voices of money urging people to lie. "You are a useful journalist"

says money to one man. "Good, I will take you into my service, I will use your talents and provide you with food, housing, and clothing. But then you must write the way I want. If you speak the truth—nothing but the pure, naked truth—you won't attract readers. Because the truth hurts, and people are not eager to pay for pain. So lie, lie with beautiful words and clever phrases, but lie—otherwise I won't pay you." There are writers who answer, "No, I do not want to live on lies, even if I die of hunger." But most bow their heads under the power of money, which they need, and gild their lies. "You are a useful merchant," says money to another. "Good, I will take you into my service and provide you with food, housing, and clothing. But then you must speak the way I want. If you speak the truth—nothing but the pure, naked truth—people won't buy your goods. So lie, lie with a quick tongue and clever advertising, but lie—otherwise I won't pay you." There are merchants who answer, "No, I do not want to live on lies, even if I die of hunger." But most bow before the power of money, which they need, and gild their lies. - "You are a useful

administrator," says money to a third person. "Good, I will take you into my service, I will get you a government position from which you can earn food, housing, and clothing. But please, don't show too much self-respect! Remember that you are a servant. Keep your convictions buried deep in your heart, or they might harm your career. Bow, bow, bow to the government that currently holds power—bow in a graceful and cunning manner, but bow. Above all, do not speak any independent truth, or I won't pay you." There are people who answer: "No, I do not want to live on lies." But most bow their heads to the power of money and bow and lie and gild their lies.-

"Yes, but. . . ."

Oh yes, I know: in our society, money is just as necessary to live as bread—that I know, and I don't deny it.

But I also know that a world driven by the chase for money is contemptible, and I deeply respect the noble passion of a young soul who, out of disdain for the world, wants to take the vow of poverty. And if that beautiful passion is later corrupted by supernaturalist authority, if that soul soon feels bitterly

disappointed, I think this is a pity, a great, great pity!

Decency is the second name that the lie of the world bears. And in this too, we need no scholarly analysis to form our moral judgment. The truth—the concrete truth, which we all can grasp with our own hands—is this: decency lies. Decency requires us to call a scoundrel "Honourable Sir," as long as he has enough money to count as a "gentleman." Decency commands us to shake hands with a lecher, if he happens to be our superior. Decency instructs us to smile sweetly at people we secretly despise. That kind of decency *lies.*

And then there's *Honour*! - Honorary positions, honorary titles, honorary ribbons. . . . Two thousand years ago, a man was crucified. He died naked—without money, without social decorum, without honor. The world nailed him to a cross in venomous revenge, because he had struck the world with fierce words and powerful thoughts. He had said: I testify that your works are evil. Thousands of people call themselves by his name—and yet they dance to the tune of money, social fashion, and empty honors. Poor puppets, you could still learn something from a monk's habit and a nun's veil.

No, no, we have not done away with the monastery's moral code when we say it is "outdated." When the monasteries preach to us: "Despise the world," we must be able to answer: yes, we despise the world deeply, and our contempt for the world is better than yours: your poverty has degenerated into a fear of nature, but the noble motive that led your best to the monastery still lives in us: it is love of nature, a sense of truth, and a sense of honor.

The second monastic virtue, or rather the second Catholic-Christian ideal, is "complete obedience." The monk takes a vow to obey all the commands of his superiors. As long as the superiors are truly superiors, the monk must obey them, always and in everything. He must not have a will of his own; he must be like a dead stick in the hand of the traveler. The will of the Church, the will of his superiors, is his will. He himself has nothing—absolutely nothing—to will. It is especially in this obedience that the monk is trained during his probation, in what is called the "novitiate."

The falsehood in this will-less submission to external authority is obvious to those who are not supranaturalists. The natural,

eternal religious striving is a striving for *self-realization*, not for *self-destruction*. The deeply religious person is proud precisely because they know how to work on their own elevation with their own courage and their own human strength. But monastic obedience forbids being proud; it says that a person, considered in themselves, is nothing—absolutely nothing—on the eternal moral and eternal religious plane; it says that a person must receive all their worth from God and from superiors outside themselves. I am not speaking about individuals but about a system. Yes, even within monastery walls proud souls can grow. *Despite* the burden of supranaturalism, natural nobility can dwell within a person. A striking example of this is the Apostle Paul. Certainly, Paul also taught monastic obedience, even though he himself was not a monk. He also claimed that a person is absolutely nothing by their own nature and must derive all their worth from the grace of a God who ultimately dispenses this grace according to absolute free will to whomever and to whatever extent He pleases. From Paul's letters, the destructive doctrine of predestination has been drawn, according to which God, the highest authority, has destined some for eternal hell and others for eternal heaven, and that a person must

simply submit to that predestination. But those supranaturalistic views could not suppress a proud spirit like Paul's. The Apostle himself gives a wonderful testimony of self-worth in a letter he wrote shortly before his death to his student Timothy: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me." "Jesus, my righteous *judge*!" Oh, I rejoice in the gray-haired theologian who can welcome that spontaneous expression of pride, which here suddenly breaks through all scholarly theological science. Jesus, my righteous judge! No, says Paul, my crown is not a mere *gift* of God's grace, my crown is not a benevolent present from a master to his slave. No, I have *honestly earned* my crown myself; Jesus is a judge who is obliged to judge me according to my own work. I have gathered the pearls that adorn my crown myself, I have lived, struggled, toiled, feared, and hoped for my crown—I have earned it myself! - Thus speaks the natural voice of self-worth in the proud heart of a Paul, despite all his theological reflections that

tried to convince him that human nature is nothing. That spontaneous expression of pride in the obedience-preaching Paul leads me to the deep truth hidden in the idea of obedience.

Was it not obedience that made the prophets of Israel proclaim: the *commandments* of God are not outside you; you can observe them in your own mouth, in your own heart? Was it not obedience that made Jesus say: I have come to fulfill the will of Him who *sent* me? Was it not obedience that gave Luther the courageous words: it is unwise to do anything against one's conscience?

Yes, that was obedience—not a mindless submission to external authority, but proud dedication to a life's task imposed by one's own inner calling. When the prophets speak of the "commandments" of God—they know that their God dwells within their own soul. When Jesus speaks of the will of His Father—he knows that he and his Father are one. When Luther speaks of obedience to conscience—he knows that his conscience is his own highest self, which in its highest enthusiasm makes all his powers of reason, spirit, and heart serve itself: "Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me. Amen!"

I probably won't need to prove that "the world" has little interest in obedience to an inner calling. I'm not even referring to the thoroughly worldly types who remain confined within the narrow circle of petty concerns, financial speculations, dubious conventions of respectability, and ridiculous notions of honor. But countless others, who have a hard struggle to survive, scoff and say: "Oh, a calling is fine for a dreamer, a sickly idealist, but for us practical people, who must provide for our daily needs and those of our dependents, a calling can be no more than just a word." -

Say something like that to a young person whose heart is full of ideals! He won't believe you. And if you force him to admit that you're right, if you present him with numbers and facts, if you calculate how much money is needed to get through life decently and show him how much effort is required to earn that money, he will grow sad and wonder whether there might be a place outside the world where one can live with a calling. And if that youthful soul is Catholic, they will look with longing eyes toward a monastery cell, and—filled with an indescribable longing for their idealistic view of life, which they have lost

through your calculations, they will begin to wonder if there is not an oasis to be found in the desert of the world. That is the psychology behind most of the young men and women who take the "vow of obedience." They don't do it out of cowardice, but driven by a burning desire to be able to obey a beautiful calling. And we, who are not Roman Catholic, must respect their motive, and we must not rest until we can say: *we* too feel a noble calling within us, and we can fulfill it—even in the midst of the hardest labor to provide physical sustenance for ourselves and our loved ones—not in *obedience* to a God or superior outside of us, but to a higher calling *within* us.

Human callings are very different, depending on each person's individual nature and circumstances. But the truly noble callings are, in their deepest essence, the same. They all come down to this: *to be a blessing to others*. We all carry that calling within us, and we are all capable of fulfilling it, *no matter our circumstances*. To prove this, I do not rely on any supernatural revelation, nor on information from clairvoyants, but on natural facts that modern science has established with certainty. I mean the

science that is generally referred to as *telepathy*. That strict, exact science has discovered that our innermost, most secret thoughts are realities in the fullest sense of the word—realities that spread their influence not only when they are expressed in words, gestures, or actions, but also when they remain unspoken. A good, loving thought truly does spread happiness among our fellow beings, even if we have no means of turning that thought into action. And a bad, selfish thought truly does spread harm, even if we do not act upon it. The influence of such a thought may not be immediate or noticeable to everyone, but that influence exists, because the thought itself is a reality. Whether you call these thoughts "spirit" or "matter" ultimately makes no difference. But once you know that your thoughts are *real*, you must also understand that through your thoughts alone, you can do something—you can fulfill a calling. Your innermost motive, your most secret thought, falls into the realm of ideas like a stone falling into water; it remains hidden, but just as the impact of a stone in water sends ripples outward, growing ever wider and

wider, so too does a thought, on its own, begin to exert an influence that expands further and further until it eventually reaches the very outer edges of society. I repeat: I do not say this without knowing it to be true. I am merely drawing inevitable conclusions from the truth of telepathy, which has been confirmed by strict, exact science.

So we can practice true obedience even when we are weighed down by the burdens of daily life. We can obey our human calling—to be a blessing to others—without writing books, without giving speeches, without engaging directly in philanthropic or social work. We can *do* a great deal simply by *thinking* in a good, noble, selfless, and loving way. Every thought of generosity, forgiveness, and love is an act that spreads outward in ever-widening circles and will, sooner or later, show its influence even in the visible structures of society. Who, then, could still say: I have too much to "do," I have too many worries about survival to speak of a meaningful calling? Loving thoughts are within reach for all of us—if only we are willing to choose them.

Our inner being is a mystical monastery, which the "world" cannot reach

so long as we keep it properly closed off from it. The "superior" in that monastery is our higher self, and the brothers or sisters are our inner motives, our thoughts as real forces. These motives have not taken a "vow" of obedience, nor would that be necessary. These motives are bound by the *natural duty* of obedience, and the more our higher self trains them to live out that natural duty, the more perfectly true obedience is practiced within the monastery of our soul.

The third monastic virtue, the third Catholic ideal, is "eternal chastity." By vow, the monk or nun is required to abstain from all sexual relations.

Let us seriously ask again: what is false and what is true in chastity as understood by the monastic? I have actually already addressed the falsehood in monastic abstinence when speaking about poverty. The Catholic starts from the standpoint that God is a supernatural being, or, what amounts to the same thing, a transcendent being. Therefore, he must believe that the closer he removes himself from nature, the closer he will be to God. His striving must be directed toward complete indifference to all natural pleasure

gericht zijn. We, the inwardly moral, take a different stance. For us, God is in nature itself, united with it as one inseparable whole. God, the highest Life, is to be enjoyed in healthy natural pleasure — that must be our aim. Life, not abstinence from life, is our worship. To honor God, who is Life itself, the perfect Life, we can only live. To kill one life force within us, to hinder the natural development of one life force within us, is a sin against God, who is nothing but Life.

And yet — there is also some truth in the monk's idea of chastity. It is a fact that thousands of believing Catholics have sincere and genuine respect for priests who do not know marital pleasure. It is a fact that Greek Catholics, who are Orthodox Roman Catholic but whose priests may marry, do not have as much respect for their priests as our Latin Catholics do. It is a fact that all followers of Buddhism believe that Buddha left his wife when he dedicated himself to a higher task. It is a fact that the ancient Romans felt deep respect for the Vestal virgins, who did not marry. It is a fact that all of Christendom,

Catholic or Protestant, always imagines their master Jesus as unmarried. There must be something deeply true in that constant, religious respect for sexual abstinence. What is that truth? What good motive underlies that respect?

Before I give a clear answer to this question, I must point out a feeling that we all nurture to some degree, and that, by our own judgment, ennobles us. I mean our respect for beauty. That respect fills us already when we look upon what we commonly call lifeless matter. The vast, immeasurable sea with its wild ripples up close and its calm swells far away, its harmonious blending and richly mixed array of colors, playfully frolicking here with splashing foam, fading away there, very, very far with the blue horizon, the peaks of the Alps crowned with sparkling white ice — the bright stars against the black night sky — the dawn and the sunset glow — all those magnificent natural phenomena make our hearts tremble with reverence. But there are different degrees of beauty. Beauty grows with the greater development, the refinement of the life-organization in which it dwells. Beauty extends its powerful

charm ever more gloriously through lifeless matter to plants, to animals, to humans. To humans — in them, beauty celebrates its highest triumphs for our perception. In humans, the visible triumphal procession of beauty ends. In them, it remains enthroned as in its most sacred temple. There, it reveals itself not only in colors and lines but in the delicate radiance of the nobility of the soul. In the fragile human body, it awaits the highest inspirations of blissful emotion and creative art.

The calling of the human body in nature's design is exalted. But what does the world make of it, especially in sexual life? I do not wish to go into details. We all know only too well that there is much that is repulsive concerning the masterpiece of the entire visible nature. There are still artists who can kneel before the beauty of the human being. There are still worshippers of beauty who have respect for the human body. But the "world"… I am sometimes glad, truly glad, that the stars are so far away, so endlessly distant from us. If the filthy world could reach those pure-white stars, it would defile them with its sacrilegious hands. Is it any wonder that humans, in their

best moments, cry out for something better than married life, which is so often desecrated? Is it any wonder that the spontaneous urge for purity inspires respect for sexual abstinence, now that sexual intercourse has become so depraved? Yes, there is something true, something beautiful in the monk's ideal of chastity. And that is: a protest against the defilement of the most beautiful creature of visible nature.

I know that protest is one-sided. But we have not dismissed that protest simply by pointing out its one-sidedness. When the monks call out to us in their ascetic isolation: "Be chaste, be chaste," we should be able to respond proudly and without remorse:

"Yes, I am chaste, and I understand purity better than you. *Your* chastity is something negative, your chastity is nothing but abstinence; *my* chastity is the glorious, positive feeling of adoring beauty. That adoration of beauty fills me with respect for nature, especially human nature. That positive adoration of beauty is the force that restrains me from every disrespectful act, from every disrespectful thought even toward the human body." -

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

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In the original meaning of the Sacraments, Annie Besant [1] sees, *firstly*, a symbolic and pictorial way of expressing deep truths — truths that would otherwise be difficult to grasp for people who are not used to thinking about profound or philosophical matters, unless presented in such a visual and illustrative form; and *secondly*, ceremonies that, through a peculiar combination of sounds and gestures, exert a real power over the soul of those who receive the Sacraments.

I can agree with Annie Besant on the *second* point in principle (no seriously thinking person somewhat familiar with the science of religion can doubt the *first*).

Certainly, there are certain sounds that awaken certain feelings in our soul. The deep tones of a large tower bell incline us toward religious contemplation; minor chords make us tender-hearted; major chords evoke cheerfulness

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1 *Esoteric Christianity*, chap. XII.

and courage; seventh chords leave us with a sense of unrest—unless they are resolved. There are also certain gestures that undeniably affect our state of mind. Who doesn't immediately think of hypnosis in this context? It stands to reason, then, that those who instituted the Sacraments also intended to influence the soul of the recipient through sounds and gestures.

But, the tower bell could not awaken religious reflection if a person did not already possess within themselves the capacity to reflect religiously, even without the bell. Music cannot stir any feeling in us that does not already lie dormant within us, independent of the music. The hypnotist cannot evoke moods that could not also exist independently of his gestures in the souls of those he hypnotizes. Likewise, the Sacraments *presuppose* the feelings and convictions that they aim to awaken, affirm, elevate, or intensify in a person. The Sacrament assumes in the one who receives it a certain conviction or a certain intention—without which it cannot exert any power. I am well aware that the Roman Catholic Church now teaches that the Sacraments operate *ex opere operato*—i.e., entirely

independently of the intention of the person receiving them. According to the Church, it is therefore possible for a person, even without the slightest personal intention, to increase immediately in moral and religious worth simply by unconsciously receiving a Sacrament. But I do not expect such a purely external view of religion and morality from my readers. I write for people who understand that everyone is fully responsible for their own life, that no one can become better or worse except through their own thoughts or feelings—the seeds of their own actions—though of course everyone also needs the external help of nature and of fellow human beings to be able to do good themselves.

So, what intention is presupposed in the original meaning of each of the seven Sacraments in the soul of the person who receives them?

Annie Besant did not answer this question, as she mainly addressed the occult side of the issue.

Yet answering this ethical question is extremely important for all of us who understand that the moral and religious value of a person must be sought in their intentions, in their inner motives.

I shall try to give an answer to that weighty question.

First, let it be noted that I do not assume the reader holds any *particular* religious or historical conviction. I start from matters anyone can observe for themselves, without deep study and without ascetic preparation. Nevertheless, not everyone will understand me immediately. I am going to speak of simple—very simple—things, yet the conceptual confusion that the churches have produced in most people's minds makes the simplest matters hard for many to grasp. It is often even dangerous, in surroundings dominated by outward, concept-confusing ritualism, to speak simple truths. I believe a good part of the wisdom Jesus shared only with his chosen disciples was very simple, but precisely because of its simplicity it was dangerous for people accustomed to living amid Babel-like confusions. Jesus, who pronounced the "poor in spirit" blessed, who called the little children to himself and urges us to learn from them, nonetheless felt obliged to reckon with the inherited, deep-rooted false ideas about religion and morality. For example, he (Jesus) - who called his God "Father" - did not always protest against the Old

Testament God of vengeance, who punished sinners with eternal hell. Instead, he often drew *true* conclusions from the *false* concept of God held by the Jews. What is his preaching about the Last Judgment if not a valid conclusion drawn from the false image of God the Israelites had formed? "You believe that God punishes sinners? Then, by all means, fear the wrath of your God if you are cruel to your fellow human beings. You believe that God casts the wicked into eternal hell? Well then, he will one day come to separate the goats from the sheep. Then he will call out to those who have shown no compassion for their fellow creatures: '*Depart from me, you accursed ones, into the eternal fire!*'"

I can imagine how painful it must have been for Jesus not to be able to proclaim his simple, esoteric wisdom to the people: "People, God is not a God of vengeance; God is a God of love. So do not fear your God, but serve Him by making yourselves happy; because He is Love, you cannot serve Him better than by being happy—and you will be happy when you love one another." That would have been very simple and very true—but most people would not have understood him. Most of his "followers" would simply

have thrown away all their ceremonies and dogmas and then "enjoyed themselves" in an animal fashion, without ever trying to discover the kernel of truth hidden in those ceremonies and dogmas.

That does not mean, of course, that Jesus' teachings contained no "occult" wisdom. I am convinced that, alongside any hidden wisdom, they also held simple truths—truths that only child-like souls can grasp and that prove dangerous to proud or confused minds.

What I am now going to write about the seven Sacraments is just such simple truth—readily understandable to any thinking person—and, let me repeat, it in no way diminishes the value of research into the Sacraments' occult side.

This straightforward truth I shall offer, without any pangs of conscience, to anyone willing to listen. In our day the simple—let me say the natural—aspect of Christianity must no longer be veiled from proud and muddled minds as it was in Jesus' time. Nowadays, after all, everyone who can read wants to "think." It is therefore more dangerous to leave the crowd to its own confused ideas than to help it think rightly.

I shall elaborate this natural truth with heartfelt joy, for *it lends*

itself at once to a practical blessing, while the occult side of the Sacraments must wait for eminent occultists to rediscover it before it can be put into practice.

The first of the seven Sacraments is *Baptism*. To "be baptized" has always meant "to be converted, to be reborn—from sinner to righteous person." Baptism is the beginning of a human being's sanctification. According to Catholic teaching, the baptized infant is born burdened with the curse of original sin; his personality is bad, sinful, morally sick. After Baptism he is freed from that curse of original sin; he can now become a good person—provided he develops the seed of holiness, the "divine grace," which he now knows lives within him.

Within the idea of "original sin" lies a natural, simple, yet very weighty truth—one we can all see once someone points it out.

No one can deny that among existing beings there is a certain order of rank, a natural hierarchy. Plants stand higher than minerals, animals stand higher than plants, and human beings are called to stand higher than animals. We don't even need to be familiar with scientific theories

of evolution to understand this. We can see with our own eyes that plant life is more than what we usually call "inanimate" matter. We can see with our own eyes that animal life is more developed than plant life. And we can see that human beings are called to be the crown—or king—of creation.

But we also see something else—something I might call the tragedy of vocation. In classical tragedies, the hero of the drama is always destroyed *as a consequence of his very own heroic nature*. In the great drama of nature, we continually observe *that the higher a being is called to stand within a particular order of the natural hierarchy of creatures, the greater the chance that it may perish and fail*.

Take a blade of grass, for example. It is relatively undeveloped within the order of plant life. Rarely will one see a "failed" blade of grass. A rose, on the other hand, stands higher than a blade of grass. But the chances of "failure" are also immediately much higher. One careless touch of a human hand, the cold breath of a single night—and the rose is bent, its development ruined. It has not become what it was meant to be.

A worm stands relatively low in animal

development. For that reason a worm will not easily perish. Cut a worm in two and it will often recover its vitality. A bird is more highly developed than a worm, yet in a bird the chances of failure, of ruin, are already far greater than in a worm. One careless wing-beat against a rock, one day too long in an unhealthy climate, and the bird falls ill: it has failed, it has not become what it was meant to be.

That is the great tragedy of nature:
The higher a creature's calling, the greater the risk of lamentable failure.

And now—think of the lofty calling of humanity! In spite of everything, the human being longs to be a poet. He wants to blaze with enthusiasm for all that is beautiful and noble. However deeply his poet's soul lies buried beneath the cares of earning bread, however badly his urge toward poetry has been crippled by the claws of brutal passion, in moments of homesickness for freedom and rekindled love of purity he yearns to lose himself in devout reverence for Beauty. That is the human calling! In spite of everything, the human being also longs to be a philosopher. However cruel the lies and the banality that desecrate his soul may be, in moments of self-reflection, he cries out for more

than bread and shelter and clothing—he longs to see, see, see, and to delight in contemplation alone; he longs to know the Truth. That is humanity's calling—his lofty, royal calling!

Now ask, with Bilderdijk: [1]

> "Why then, you god on earth,
> Are you but sheer insignificance?"

And the law of tragedy in nature will answer you: Precisely because humanity's calling is so exalted, the chances of dreadful failure must be nearly infinite in number. Is not the rose called to be more than the blade of grass? And are there not more broken roses than broken blades of grass? Is not the bird called to be more than the worm? And are there not more sick birds than sick worms? And is not man called to be more than grasses and worms and birds? Is not man called to rise far above all other visible beings? Well then, the general laws of nature can make no exception for him. Most human beings must fail—more tragically than all other visible beings—precisely because their human calling is so much higher than the calling of the "brute" animals. The curse of humanity's downfall is his very humanity. Because man

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1 **Willem Bilderdijk** (1756–1831) was a prominent Dutch poet, historian, and intellectual—one of the leading literary and political figures in the Netherlands during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

is born a human being, the curse of failure lies upon him from birth. Every person who inherits human nature from human parents also inherits the near certainty of tragic failure — that is the natural truth of original sin.

You ask whether there is a way to be freed from that curse.

I answer decisively: yes.

In my further explanation of the Sacraments, I will elaborate on that answer.

But first and foremost, let it be said: man's moral liberation must come from man himself — for no one can become morally better except through their own life, and the very first condition for self-improvement is *self-knowledge*. To *know* that in inheriting human nature we have also inherited the evil, the cruelty, the envy, the deceitfulness of our own individual being — that is the beginning of conversion. That is *being baptized* in natural truth. To admit to ourselves and to our fellow human beings that the curse of original sin descended upon our individual selves at birth — and to admit this not out of hypocritical Pharisaical humility, but because of the overwhelming evidence of nature’s tragic law — that is to receive the Baptism of

blessed self-knowledge. This most essential self-knowledge does not concern our particular personal traits. It is the firm, general conviction: I am a human being, and therefore I was born as a human failure — ignorant, cruel, jealous, bad — and not because human nature itself is bad, but precisely because human *nature* is so lofty, the chances of failure among its individual *instances* are so numerous.

Many confuse human nature with individual human specimens, and by doing so, they perceive the cause of human corruption in human nature itself. Such people are misanthropes — they may be individuals of very high moral standing, but their lives must be filled with torment. One example of such a misanthrope is Lady Anna de Savornin Lohman.[1] I do not mention her to oppose her personally, but because her ideas help clarify our subject. Not long ago, Lady Lohman openly expressed her contempt for humanity in *De Vrije Socialist*. She said that no one could have a greater revulsion than she does for our "detestable, hypocritical," "civilized," "orderly," "Christian" society. "But," she says, "my aversion is based on my

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1 **Catharina Anna Maria de Savornin Lohman** (1868–1930) was a Dutch aristocrat who became a trailblazing writer, journalist, and feminist, challenging societal norms through her sharp critiques and literary work. Denied formal education because of her gender, she forged her own path and left a lasting mark as an independent thinker and outspoken voice in Dutch intellectual life.

aversion to human nature itself. It is thoroughly bad and... thoroughly stupid! As long as you fail to change that bad and stupid human nature — (and in my opinion, you will never succeed) — you will also never obtain a juster society."

Miss Lohman is mistaken — fortunately. No, it is not the intention of Nature itself to make us bad and stupid. Our natural calling is not stupidity and wickedness, but sacred enthusiasm for Beauty, humble knowledge of Truth. It is true that failure occurs precisely because of the high calling of human nature in most human beings, but in Nature's purpose lies also the power to seek and find conversion through one's own knowledge and feeling. The Nature that gave the rose its thorns to defend itself against careless human hands, the Nature that gave the birds wings to fly to the skies where they feel most comfortable, that same Nature gave us humans *understanding* and *will* to combat the curse of original sin.

Can the human who has received Baptism, can the human who has recognized the corruption of his own self, still become morally healthy? I have already answered: *yes*, and

I find my answer hidden in the natural truth concealed in the second Sacrament, which was originally administered immediately after Baptism, namely *Confirmation*.

When speaking about Confirmation, I must first draw your attention to an important and very obvious difference between Baptism and Confirmation. In the Roman Church, *anyone* can administer Baptism, while only the High Priest, the *Bishop*, has the authority to administer Confirmation.[1]

This can only be based on the constant conviction of the Catholic Christianity that a very special holiness is required to make someone partaker of the grace of Confirmation.

I understand this conviction of Catholic Christianity now that I have reflected much on the Sacraments. It gives me the key to the hidden truth of Confirmation, which in the Roman Church has been completely lost. Anyone can *baptize*. Anyone can make us aware of the fact that by far the majority

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1 Only in exceptional cases, due to practical necessity in mission lands, may an ordinary priest — by special authorization from the Pope — administer the Sacrament of Confirmation, and even then, he must use chrism (consecrated oil) that has been blessed by a bishop.

of human beings are moral failures. But *not* everyone can, by their own power, make it penetrate our souls so deeply: People, you *can* repent; people, you can become good and happy, if you *know* and if you *want* to. That gospel of knowing and willing can only be proclaimed by those who can set themselves as an example, who can point to themselves and say: look, I am a human like you, and I am wise and good; your wickedness therefore does not lie in the *nature* of humanity itself, which also dwells in me, but in your *personality*.

And Confirmation is indeed the imparting of the *power* to become good and wise, after the first sanctification through Baptism. "I make you strong," says the Bishop to the confirmand;[1] he consecrates the confirmand as a soldier of virtue. Indeed, not everyone can do that, no ordinary person can, no ordinary priest is capable of that; only a Bishop—in holiness—can do that, who in his own personal goodness and wisdom *proves* that humanity is not hopelessly lost through original sin. We know such Bishops-in-holiness. I only want to point to the One who will remain the grand master for us Westerners: JESUS. He is our Bishop, our High Priest par excellence, who,

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1 The **confirmand** is the person being confirmed.

through his exalted teaching and his eminently holy life, *proves* to us that human nature—*his* nature—is capable of glorious things, despite the corruption found in so many human examples. Since I do not presume any specific religious or historical belief among my readers, I must also take into account those who can see nothing more than a beautiful legend in the story of Jesus. It is certainly true that only *facts* can prove that human nature can still be good and wise. But I ask you: is there, within Christianity, any greater fact imaginable than the figure of Christ—even setting aside all scientific historical research? Let that figure be a creation of poetic imagination; the fact remains that human nature is capable of creating something as great and noble as what we admire in the figure of Christ. Even if Jesus were not a historical person, the fact remains that all the exalted elements of his teachings and life are a product of human nature. The fact remains that the Sermon on the Mount exists; the fact remains that the human heart holds such reverence for Truth that it can rejoice when a hero gives their life out of love for that Truth. Let Jesus be a fabrication of human poetry—then still, the *fact* remains that the human being

who created him is administering to us the Confirmation, saying: “I make you strong in the struggle for what is good, for I show you that there is nobility dwelling in the human soul.”

It should now be easy to picture the person who has drawn strength from the fundamental truth about human life conveyed in the first two Sacraments. Baptized through humble self--knowledge, they know that the lofty dignity of human nature exposes their personal being to a thousand dangers of failure. Yet, strengthened by seeing the greatness and nobility that human nature has brought forth, they know that they can face those dangers.

It follows naturally that such a person, if they feel any sense of their soul's nobility, will wish to be freed from their moral failings. Knowing that universal human nature is *good*, and their particular, limited personality is flawed, they will strive to erase all traces of particularism within themselves, in order to allow the universal human nature to live as freely as possible within them. More and more, they will become deeply aware of the truth that, morally speaking, their humanity must be everything and their individualism nothing; they will continually dedicate themselves to the *general*, the *human*, the

divine within oneself, and to cast off the particular, the individualistic. They will continually sacrifice their particularistic, personal, selfish life for the sake of their universal human life, because only that universal life holds true value for them. In doing so, they will come to better understand the words of Jesus: “Whoever loses their life shall find it.”

This moral growth, this universalization of human nature within a person striving toward perfection, is beautifully symbolized in the third Sacrament: *the Eucharist*. Just as the Catholic believes they unite most intimately with God in the Eucharist (the Sacrament of the Altar), by literally consuming God under the appearance of bread, so too does the person who works to tear down the wall built around them by limiting self-interest come to feel the divine life glowing ever more intensely within them.

I said that I do not assume any particular religious belief on the part of my readers, and for that reason I am obliged to clarify this natural Eucharistic truth—which I expressed in religious terms—in relation to the different perspectives my readers may hold on the question of God's existence and nature.

I distinguish here primarily between the following standpoints: *pantheism*, *theism*, and *atheism*.

The *pantheist* will have no objection to my explanation. The pantheist knows that God, the source of all life, is *the* impersonal Life that manifests itself in countless forms throughout the world. For them, it must therefore be clear that they will absorb this impersonal, divine Life all the more perfectly as their limited self gives way to *the* impersonal human nature they feel as a unity within themselves and in their fellow human beings. A common objection to pantheism is that it does not give enough recognition to human "individuality." That objection is based on a very regrettable misunderstanding. The "individuality" of a person, insofar as it holds moral value, is nothing other than the *freedom* of human nature as it is expressed in a human individual. That freedom means, in its perfection: moral *independence* from *all* personality—including one's own. To be enslaved by one's *own* personality is just as shameful and just as miserable as to be enslaved by another's. Morally, we stand higher, we are morally freer, not in proportion to how much our own person dominates, but in proportion to how strongly our *human*

dignity acts—both toward others and toward our own individual self.

The theist, who sees God as a *person*, *distinct* from created nature, will not, by the nature of their system, be able to believe in as intimate a union with God as the pantheist. But insofar as the theist believes they can unite with God, they will agree with me that the attitude which opens the soul to receiving the divine Life is the same Eucharistic disposition, the same "universalization" that the pantheist strives for. After all, it is a principle upheld by all theistic philosophers that all existence originates from the Supreme Being as the source of *general* "being" itself, but each created thing manifests that being in a *specifically* unique way. ("Deus facit ens, creatura hoc ens"). [1]

Finally, the *atheist* claims to want nothing to do with God. But even so, they will still acknowledge a *highest reality*. There must be *something* in which they seek their highest happiness, and—at least if they are a person with any heart—they will seek that highest happiness in love. Love *is* their highest reality, their God, just as it is for the theist or the

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1 "God creates being; the creature creates *this* being."

pantheist. Now, in order to enjoy the abundance of love, even they must strive for universalization; their union with their highest reality, their eucharist, can only be achieved by erasing limited selfishness—because love is a feeling of unity, and limited selfishness is division.

I have named to you the God that all honourable people practically worship: *Love*. Indeed, all people who seek their happiness in true Love, in a genuine feeling of deep unity, are *religious* people, even if they call themselves materialists. God *is* Love, and only those who categorically reject all love as such are irreligious in the fullest sense of the word. I have met such people on my life's path, and they have caused me great pain. I have truly heard from the mouths of gifted men: "*I* want no love, I do not want to be loved; my highest pleasure is to be feared." Such people are truly irreligious, but fortunately, there are not many of them. Most people cry out for love, and the urge for love is actually the deepest motive behind the natural reception of the Sacraments. Why, then, would a person want to be baptized? Why would they want to recognize that from birth

they are a morally failed individual, if not in order to repent and thus become worthy of love? Why would a person want to be confirmed, to be strengthened by heroes of the spiritual life, if not because they love those heroes? Why would a person want to become godlike, to universalize themselves, why would they want to renounce their limiting egoism, if not to be able to feel united in love with another person, with many people, even with all of nature?

God is Love, and true worship is to love and to be loved. What I'm saying here is certainly nothing new. All religious preachers have glorified Love. But even loving and being loved is subject to the tragic law of nature I spoke of. Precisely because love and being loved are such lofty, sacred feelings, they are also delicate; and that is why a person can so easily turn their own loving impulse—which is meant to be their blessing—into a curse.

Yes, it is dangerous to speak of love. And I believe I can point out that danger very clearly. It is all too easy to turn love into a *commandment*. Whoever feels the blessing of love is all too likely to exclaim: "People, love one another!" But

that already poses a great danger to tender love. Love cannot be *commanded*; one cannot even *encourage* someone to love. Love must arise naturally, completely spontaneously, in a human heart—otherwise, it is not love. And that is why I do not say to you: "Love one another!" No, a thousand times no—I do not *preach* love. But I can point you to an infallible means by which love can naturally begin to grow in your heart. I find that means in the natural truth of the fourth Sacrament: *Confession*.

Why do people not love one another? I will tell you: people do not love each other *because they do not know each other*. Most people guard their innermost life very carefully within their own souls, and do not reveal it entirely, even to those with whom they are most intimate. We know this, and therefore we also know that we do not truly *know* one another. That's why we mistrust each other—and love and mistrust cannot go together. Oh, what depth of wisdom lies in the simple words we read in the Acts of the Apostles about the early Christians: "and they confessed their sins to one another." In *every* person, there is something that, when seen, must be loved with passionate enthusiasm; behind

all the dark clouds of human faults and crimes shines the glorious sun of our royal, human nature. In every human heart lies a noble pearl, which remains untouched even when surrounded by the fiercest hatred, even when so much beauty around it has been consumed by envy and vengeance. But to see that sun in a human heart—and thus to be able to love it—to find that pearl in the soul of another—and thus to value it—the clouds that veil the sun must become transparent, and the envy and vengeance gnawing around the pearl must disappear. In other words: No one can love the beauty in a person unless they have first understood—and therefore forgiven—the ugliness in them. But who can understand what is carefully kept hidden?

We do not love one another because we do not see the beauty in each other; and we cannot see that beauty as long as we have not understood—and therefore forgiven—the ugliness. That is why the early Christians confessed their sins to one another, and that is also why it could be said of them: See how they love one another.

People who are seeking love, I do not say to you: love one another; but I do say: get to know one another. Do not be ashamed to have those circles

of familial affection, in which you show yourselves to one another just as you are. Do not be ashamed before each other that you are poor, weak human beings; for there is so much beauty in you, there is enough greatness in you to make each of you truly lovable.

I say this with such certainty because I speak from experience. As a Catholic priest, I have heard confessions. It is true that the sacramental confession has, for very many Roman Catholics, been reduced to a cold, official practice, but many Catholic souls who are truly religious still feel the natural truth of the original confession. I have experienced this, and I dare to say with full confidence that it is impossible not to feel deep love for a person who truly confesses—from a natural impulse to pour out their heart from one human heart to another. It is impossible, for anyone who is not irreligious in the sense I just described, not to see and love the noble humanity in a person whose heart opens up honestly and allows itself to be known. Confession—the honest, heartfelt confession—is a seed from which deep, unfailing love must inevitably grow. There are not enough tears to mourn the fact that confession in the Roman Church is so often tragically

reduced to a cold duty, to a painful admission before an official person, and that outside the Roman Church, the blessing of confession is so little known. Once more: to preach love is often to distort love; but truly knowing one another—knowing each other completely—is, without fail, to love each other.

But people do not know one another…

You walk through the streets of a great city—hundreds of people pass you by, hundreds of pairs of eyes searching for happiness, and behind every pair of eyes, a human soul, and in every human soul, a rich human life. But you do not see that life, because people themselves hide it—more anxiously even than the nakedness of their bodies.

Thus, human lives intersect in cities, in villages, everywhere. And everywhere, songs are sung in praise of Love, and everywhere, sermons echo about true love—but those songs lie, those sermons lie, because people cannot love one another as long as they do not know each other.

Poor, poor people! Stop singing, stop preaching, and look! Look at the human lives around you; seek out eyes that want to see into your soul—and are able to see. I know—there will be people who come to you,

trampling through your emotional pain with rough boots. But that is only because they cannot see your emotional pain. And I understand that at times, you may despair of ever finding even a single person who can truly perceive your innermost being. But do not forget that only from that kind of understanding can true love blossom. Do not bestow the noble name of love on an affection that is blind to your life, to your soul.

I have now arrived at the final three Sacraments: the *Anointing of the Sick*, *Holy Orders*, and *Marriage*. I can be brief about these. They are the necessary consequences, the beautiful fruits, of the practice of the first four Sacraments. *Anointing of the Sick* is an individual consequence; *Holy Orders* and *Marriage* are social consequences.

Anointing of the Sick is the Sacrament of the dying. A remarkable distinction between this Sacrament and all the others is that in Anointing of the Sick, no *incantation* is spoken, as in the other Sacraments, but instead a prayer—inspired by blessed resignation. Yes, blessed surrender—inner peace amid outward suffering, even in the face of death—is the result for the person who receives the first four Sacraments in their natural truth.

Whoever knows and deeply feels that they are human—and therefore have a high calling to fulfill within creation, and thus also understands the heavy responsibility that comes with that calling; whoever, in the light of the heroes of the spiritual life, is convinced that they can fulfill that calling; whoever unites themselves with one God, who makes no distinction between nations or individuals; whoever wants to, and is able to, lay bare the deepest depths of their heart out of a human longing for love, to a noble person whose sacred touch of heart heals them from their sins—such a person carries within themselves a source of radiant, calm, resigned happiness and does not fear death. They have, in truth, received the Anointing of the Sick, the Sacrament of the dying, and can close their eyes in trust in the universal Justice that lives in all worlds.

And wherever several such people live together, the two final Sacraments—Holy Orders and Marriage—will naturally emerge as social consequences of these inwardly holy states of soul, like beautiful flowers blooming from fertile soil.

There, priests will arise naturally—not by official appointment, but by a natural calling—leading others in wisdom and goodness. There, kindred souls will naturally

find one another and unite in the one true, natural marriage of love.

Oh, I know—not all people can understand or put into practice the hidden and yet so simple truth of the Sacraments. In our world of money, status, and respectability, I see only small groups of noble souls who are able to do so.

But those small groups of people will be happy — deeply, beautifully happy in themselves, and through that, will radiate happiness to others. They are the hidden seeds from which a better society can slowly grow. Is a flower not automatically an ornament to its surroundings if it is beautiful in itself? Does the sun not warm us simply because it is a source of warmth? So too must a human being become a blessing to others if they are beautiful and happy within themselves. A happy person possesses a natural nobility that spontaneously ennobles and uplifts others. Nobility of birth has had its day; the aristocracy of wealth rules only by the power of capital; but the nobility of happiness—the natural nobility of a truly happy person — remains a natural source of blessing for humanity.

And these happy groups of noble people are united in a strong bond. They have one confession—not of a forced faith,

but of an unshakable knowledge of truths that nature teaches us.

And their creed of knowledge is this:

(*Baptism*.) I know that I am a human being. My human calling is exalted, but precisely because of that, I cannot fulfill that calling when left to myself. Left to myself, I must remain a pitiful failure of a noble attempt.

(*Confirmation*.) Yet within my human nature lie dormant wondrous powers of knowledge and will, which can make me into a successful masterpiece of creation. I know this, because I see those powers of knowledge and will in heroes, who possess the same nature as I do.

(*Eucharist*.) These powers of knowledge and will are hindered in their growth by the burden of immoral selfishness. I know that only in selfless love are strength and happiness to be found. To dissolve myself in love is my only salvation, my sole redeeming faith.

(*Confession*.) I know that love can only live in freedom. Love cannot be commanded into being; it can only grow from free understanding. Love inevitably grows from complete understanding. I know that I will love every person I truly understand.

I know that everyone who truly understands me will love me.

(*Anointing of the Sick*.) Whoever truly understands the universe will love the universe and be unable to hate anything in it. I know that all resentment springs from ignorance. To the wise, everything is good as it is. The wise live and die in serenity.

(*Holy Orders*.) From among people bound by this confession of knowing, priests will arise—priests by nature, people called by their sharp minds and tender hearts to lead others. And those who truly know will not envy them. For such naturally called priests are inexhaustible sources of happiness for humanity.

(*Marriage*.) Among those bound by this confession of knowing, couples will emerge who, in sacred ecstasy of love, bring forth new human beings.

And these new human beings will be the youngest life, slowly blooming from petrified dogmas. —

Whoever sees in Christianity an expression of the ideal striving in the innermost depths of humanity must surely rejoice in the revival of that ideal striving—a revival that is undoubtedly taking place in our time. That there is much

that is misguided in our contemporary spirit, who would deny it? But a deeply human ideal striving for justice, freedom, and wisdom lies at the very foundation of the three major ideological movements of our time, which we may call: Socialism, Anarchism, and Theosophy. This will be acknowledged by anyone who can look beyond the veil of outward forms and perceive the innermost motives behind these movements. Whether these motives will truly take hold of the human heart depends on the strength and purity of the motives themselves. It is not the propagation of "principles" to as many people as possible, but rather the purification and strengthening of the human motives that will ultimately benefit humanity.

For us Westerners, I see only one effective and radical way to purify and strengthen these good motives: a natural connection to the organic growth of Catholic life.

I do not claim that Christianity is the "universal religion" of humankind. But in the West, the ideal of religious life has become intertwined with Christianity, and the only gradual and natural outgrowth of Christianity is Catholic life.

Natural-historical reflection must therefore lead us to connect with Catholic

life, and specifically: to strive for the realization of the Catholic and natural ideals that we have discovered in the "monastic virtues," by means of the natural truths hidden within the seven "Sacraments." This natural alignment, in the direction of natural, well-known ideals through natural, well-known truths, will lead to a fundamental renewal of our Christian life. But only on the condition that all artificiality, all supernaturalism, is avoided.

No more artificial administration of Sacraments by ministers who are "officially" "ordained" and "appointed" for that purpose.

No more artificial separation from the world through thick walls and heavy bars.

The inner person separates themselves quite naturally from the world through deep inward detachment.

No more artificial rejection of natural pleasures through gloomy asceticism, but rather the joyful, joyful message—the eternal human gospel: *distinguish* within natural enjoyment the higher from the lower, and grow through the joy of the higher.

That fundamentally renewed life

is not something I wish to create. I do not want to preach it into existence for humanity. But I see that it is beginning to *become*—everywhere: in the Catholic Church, in the Protestant, in the modern movement, in Socialism, in Anarchism, in Theosophy. I only wish to help my readers become conscious of what may already unconsciously live within them, and thus hasten their evolution.

Our higher life will become:

Christian, for it grew from the soil of the human heart, fertilized by the ideals of Jesus.

Naturalistic, for it acknowledges no special, supernatural revelation to a single people for a single time.

Mystical, for it perceives the living realities deeply hidden within dogmas and ecclesiastical institutions.

This religious life will rise, slowly but surely, from what is most deeply human in humanity. It will rejoice and exult in glorious freedom and celebrate in a fresh, open-hearted understanding of nature. All the old Catholic feasts, which Protestantism has unfortunately rejected for the most part, will return—renewed in their true meaning. The mystical tones of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day will once again resound, lifting hearts

upward into realms unknown to the world.

Thus shall this life be in relation to itself. What, then, will be its relationship to the social movements of our time? That will be the subject of the next chapter.

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MILITARISM.

I have already said: nothing exists entirely separate from its surroundings. Our spiritual environment, however, includes not only the religious forms that directly or indirectly influence our inner life, but also the spirit of the age in which we live. Just as churches have their dogmas, every age has its powerful *slogans*. Even if we completely avoid involvement with organizations, programs, or principles of associations, the slogans of our time will still touch our thoughts and feelings. So we must examine and explore those slogans, just as we examine the dogmas of our mother Church. Our time, especially, has its social slogans. It is absolutely necessary that we are able to form a correct inner and moral judgment about them. After all, the spirit of our age will influence us; it is up to us to ensure that it influences us for the good—that is, that we *learn* something from it.

The social slogans of our time can be summed up as:

Down with militarism!

Down with capitalism!

Down with authority!

Down with conventional views on sex life! —

What "happens" to the individuals or "movements" who carry these slogans, or what their programs or organizations are—this does not touch the essence of the matter. But within these slogans, all the good and all the bad that lives in the motivational world of movements or individuals is expressed. Let us therefore subject these slogans, one by one, to an inner moral critique.

"Down with militarism!"

What is militarism—or rather: what is a soldier?

It goes without saying that I do not have in mind those men who, due to circumstances (law, poverty, etc.), are forced to be soldiers for a time and then fight when they must, and are glad when they don't have to. I refer here to the type of the true professional soldier—or, to use the moral designation: I am speaking of the soldier by intention.

And I define a soldier as follows: a man who has chosen as his profession to make violence triumph in service of a government, regardless of whether the specific cause for which he fights is just or not.

I cannot take back a single word of this definition, and I believe that every serious reader will agree that it is evidently correct.

Is a soldier not truly a man who has chosen as his profession to make physical violence triumph in the service of a government?

Surely no one would dare to claim that a soldier, as such, fights for the realization of moral *justice*! The truly active soldier—even the highest-ranking officer—does not determine which of the two warring powers is in the right, or which one has the moral advantage.

The soldier is armed with rifle, revolver, saber, cannon—all instruments not meant to make the one who wields them more truthful or just, but more powerful, more destructive. And these tools of violence the soldier must indeed use *on command*, obeying orders regardless of whether the cause he fights for is just or not. That too is a truth no one can deny. A soldier is in *service*. He *serves* his monarch or president and is considered completely unaccountable for the morality of any given war. The soldier must fight—not judge. He is not even allowed to judge.

There you have what a soldier is—there you have the spirit that militarism embodies.

Now, from a consistently inner-moral standpoint, how must we judge militarism? Is militarism a blessing or a curse for human society? What must we be: militarist-by--intention or antimilitarist-by-intention?

Let us not forget: it is the spirit of militarism that concerns us here. Once we agree with the "ethics of intention," we must first seriously ask ourselves: what is the truly militaristic intention, and what is the truly antimilitaristic intention?

We saw that, for the typical "soldier," only external force may count, and that the question of right or wrong among the warring parties may not hold the slightest meaning for him. The motto that genuine, consistent militarism must inscribe on its banner is therefore: "Violence is everything to me, justice is nothing."

If ever it applies, it applies here: to ask a question well is to solve it. Militarism is immoral, unholy—it is a curse for humanity. For militarism desires the triumph of violence as such, and that is wrong, That is, in the highest degree, immoral.

Opposed to the militaristic motto: "*Violence is everything, justice is nothing*," an honest, consistently moral person will place the ethical principle: "*Justice is everything, violence is nothing*."

This principle can be violated in two ways:

1. by approving of violence as such.
2. by rejecting violence as such (that is, without paying attention to the motive from which the violence arises).

Reverence for external force is the lifeblood of militarism, which has brought such terrible disasters upon humanity. It would be easy—and cheaply sensational—to list many horrors of war here; but that would not move us forward.

The hallmark of the militaristic spirit is by no means cruelty. Yes, a soldier or an army can be cruel—but so can a scholar or an artist. But who, for that reason, would claim that cruelty is the defining trait of science or art? Listing the horrors of war only distracts people far too much from the essential, defining characteristic of the militaristic spirit: reverence for

external, triumphant power. - When we truly consider this defining feature, we must realize that the militaristic spirit is not at all confined to armies and wars—it permeates our entire society. The same militaristic spirit that drives a nation into a frenzy of joy when its national army has "triumphed" at the cost of thousands of young lives also drives masses of modern barbarians to the circus and variety theater, where they delight in death-defying acrobatic stunts and the intense, dangerous spectacle of bullfights.

That same singular militaristic spirit causes party members or religious affiliates to burst into applause when they see their “debater” or “apologist” corner and “defeat” their opponent.
It is also that same militaristic spirit—the same reverence for, the same trust in external force—that leads "passive resisters" to forge a propaganda weapon out of the act of a young man who refuses to serve in the military. But isn’t that act of refusal also something *external*, passive resisters? Why, then, do you seize upon that external act to make “propaganda” with it?
Because you still trust in the power of something external. Because you are not a pure, consistent anti-militarist by intent—who does *not* expect

any external force to bring about lasting growth of human happiness. "But if all young men refused military service, the authorities would be forced to abolish war." Oh? Do you want to *force* someone to do something? Is that militaristic or anti-militaristic? Whether you fight with steel in your fists or with “acts in your fists,” morally speaking, it amounts to the same thing. I'm not telling you not to rebel, revolutionaries—do what you must. I'm not telling you to become soldiers, passive resisters—do what you must. But I am telling you this: true anti-militarist propaganda must place no hope in external force—neither steel, nor fire, nor violent deeds. No, even if tomorrow all wars were made impossible, even if all guns and swords and cannons and revolvers vanished forever, militarism would still live on—as long as there are people who expect social improvement from external strength, be it physical strength or strength of will. Anyone who wants to be a “fighter” is possessed by the disastrous militaristic spirit—even if he doesn’t wear a soldier’s uniform, and even if he shouts loudly against the horrors of war.

There is only one form of anti-militarist propaganda that, when examined closely, is not

just as militaristic as the most horrific war. That one propaganda is the pure propaganda of Truth. Truth makes its way into humanity slowly, naturally, and gradually—because people come to see the essence of things and help others see it, too, when they are capable of understanding. The propagandists of Truth are quiet thinkers: philosophers and mystics. Philosophers show their fellow humans the essence of things—the inner realities (in this case, the essence of a social slogan)—through calm, reasoned argumentation, stripped of any outward glitter meant to impress. Mystics reveal truth through clear, simple examples drawn from nature, visible to all, taking great care that these examples carry no other suggestive power than the inherent force of the Truth itself.

But that is not how the "anti-militarists" of our time spread their ideas. With them, it's all noise and fumbling with outward acts: Refusal of military service! Revolution! Organizing for power! No more "*talking* Christianity," now we need "*acting* Christianity"! But how can the calm, serious voice of Truth be heard in such clamor?

I know that I will be suspected of being a coward and of preaching cowardice. For clarity's sake, however,

I want to emphasize that I have deep respect for courageous souls. But the kind of courage I can bow to is something entirely different from what the masses call "strength" or "firmness of character" or "determination" or "grit." That kind of courage is, in a certain sense, the opposite of toughness. That courage is humility, meekness, the heart's pliability in relation to Truth. That courage has nothing to do with strong muscles or fists, with effective rifles or cannons, or with harsh actions. That courage does not live in a person who takes pleasure in "defeating" others in war, in debate, or in action. That courage appears, to superficial people, more like weakness than like strength. That courage is surrender - calm surrender, joyful surrender - nourished by the conviction that Truth will prevail, no matter what.

Jesus was a courageous man - Jesus as he rises before us from historical tradition, enriched by the religious heart of humanity. He lacked the strength to go along with the lies of the Pharisees, and from that weakness, he drew the beautiful strength to speak the truth in clear, sharply defined terms, which he did not hide even from the mighty of the earth. He was so tender of heart that he

wept over the misfortune of others, and from that emotional gentleness he drew the sacred strength to tirelessly strive for the realization of universal human happiness. He had so little personal resistance that he could not even defend his own rights; but precisely because of that, he had the great courage to remain silent before his judges, to carry his cross to Golgotha, and there to die in surrender—mocked and scorned by all the respectable people.

He placed his trust, in his work for the ages, in only one power: Truth.

Truth was enough for him.

He was not a poet trying to impress through beautiful language.

He was not a "fighter" cleverly fencing with weapons of steel or with logical tricks.

He was not a man of action seeking to display his deeds to all and everywhere in order to win as many followers as possible. He knew his ideas were real even without outward deeds.

And yet, he did not shy away from outward deeds either—when those deeds were the necessary, stern consequences of his ideas. His silent presence before the judges was a "deed" of passive resistance. His walk to Golgotha, the calm acceptance of his crucifixion—

all of it was passive resistance. But he never used those outward acts as a means of propaganda. How easily he could have spoken stirring words in court or on the way to Golgotha—what a "figure" he could have cut! But Truth was too sacred for him, too strong in itself, to want to help it along with flashy words or theatrical "deeds."

And yet, I sometimes regret that he died on the cross so very publicly. Because his followers—contrary to his spirit—have turned his beautiful passive resistance into a propaganda tool. They did not quietly and devoutly listen to the philosopher and mystic Jesus—they started to venerate the heroic martyr. And, looking down on unbelievers, they said: That hero is our man. They began to believe in Jesus - *and in him crucified*. Ah, we know all too well with what results!

Away with the cross, which Christians have degraded into a weapon of propaganda! Now, let us return to the school of our, and of Jesus', faithful teacher: Nature! — There lies a patch of land, dreaming in the calm mood of a beautiful autumn day. You see no busy life on that land, but you know that life is within it. Living seeds lie on the surface of the soil, preparing

for the joyful germination of spring. Be careful! Do not set your foot on the sown field; do not disturb the stillness of fertility. For the seeds must sprout in quiet earth. If the ground is stirred, the seed cannot be fertilized by light and air and warmth. Soon, gentle Nature will lay snow upon the land, to guard against the cold and to cover seed and soil in solemn silence.

May my words fall upon the surface of human society's actions as soundlessly as the snowflakes of a quiet winter's day! If they can but cover a small patch of the outer layer of society and protect it from growth-disrupting turmoil, then I have already *done* much.

POSTSCRIPT.

Up to now, I have considered the militaristic and anti-militaristic *spirit*, the militaristic and anti-militaristic *motive*, and have shown that the spread of the anti-militaristic

spirit: "Justice is everything, violence is nothing" can only take place in a truly anti-militaristic way: that is, without expecting any lasting good from outward violence, whatever form that violence may take.

But now another question arises: is violence *always* to be condemned? Must one not sometimes resort to violence in order to help a *particular* person in a *particular* situation?

At first glance, the moral principle "Justice is everything, violence is nothing" seems entirely Tolstoyan. Yet it is not.

Tolstoy condemns all violence [1] as such, claiming that violence is *always* something evil. I do not agree with that at all. Consistency compels me neither to condemn nor to approve of violence as such. Morally speaking, violence in itself is *nothing*—therefore neither good nor evil. Violence *becomes* good when it arises from a good motive; violence *becomes* bad when it stems from a bad motive.

A good motive, however, must above all be true. A revolutionary — that is, violent — propaganda for anti-militarism must therefore be rejected

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1 Understanding "violence" as physical, aggressive force exerted by one human being against another.

because the driving force behind such propaganda is *untrue*. It presents itself as purely anti-militaristic, but it is not, because it still hopes to reap beneficial results from one form of violence or another. However, there can indeed be a good and true motive behind the use of violence — not when violence is used to promote social reform through propaganda, but when it is used in specific instances to help certain individuals, or to discipline certain people who bring harm. There is not the slightest moral inconsistency in the act of the gentle Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple with a whip. Why not? Because the motive that led Jesus to violence was a good one.

Disgust for violence as such is just as little a sign of the pure, inwardly moral, anti-militaristic spirit as is reverence for violence as such. The consistent, morally-driven anti-militarist is *indifferent* toward violence — that is to say, he feels no attraction to it, but he also does not feel aversion to it. He is drawn to good motives; he is repelled by bad motives. Love for inner goodness, hatred for inner evil — that is his deepest life-force. And that life-force can indeed drive him to righteous indignation — and even to acts of violence. But then his act of violence is good and noble,

because it serves justice. I, who sincerely consider myself an anti-militarist by intention, would not hesitate for a moment to kill a murderer if necessary in order to defend an innocent person from him. I believe that Tolstoy, despite his doctrine, would do the same. Complete nonviolence is a utopia — as long as humans remain human. Therefore, our practical goal must be to achieve a minimum of unjust violence, otherwise it is not a truly practical goal. That minimum of unjust violence, in certain circumstances (such as the example just mentioned), can only be achieved by means of violence. In such circumstances, the consistent anti-militarist will resort to that unavoidable minimum of violence, because that minimal violence will be sanctified by its good motive.

Let me, to be as clear as possible, summarize:

1. The essence of the militaristic spirit is: reverence for outward, conquering force.

2. Pure anti-militarist propaganda aims to gradually remove the essence of the militaristic spirit from human society.

3. The motive of pure anti-militarist propaganda must be reverence for, and trust in, inner justice alone.

4. Therefore, pure anti-militarist propaganda will not make use of any outward force.

5. The pure anti-militarist spirit spreads only because people see the Truth, and allow the Truth to be seen by those who are able to understand it.

6. There can be a good motive underlying the use of violence — not to promote an idea, but rather to reduce a specific act of unjust violence to a minimum, in specific situations.

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ANARCHISM.

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So far, we have been using the term *right* in its vaguest sense, one that everyone understands. For example, when a person who harms no one in the world is attacked by a murderer on a lonely road, everyone knows that the right is on the side of the victim and that the murderer is in the wrong.

But in the long run, that vague meaning of right isn't sufficient. Let us now seriously ask ourselves: how should right be precisely defined, or at least described?

What is right? — It goes without saying that I am asking about the eternal, natural meaning of right, not the various forms in which people have dressed up right or wrong in all sorts of law books.

It is often said that the calling of a human being is to be human. This expression is correct insofar as it protests against all unnatural conceptions of human destiny and distinguishes humans from everything that is not human. It is true,

that humans carry their calling within their own nature, just as plants and animals do. Human nature is different from that of plants and animals, and consequently, the calling of a human being is different from the calling of plants and animals. A human being is called to live in a *human way*.

But just as no two plants or animals are completely identical, so too are no two humans exactly alike in all respects. One person is gifted with a clear intellect, another has relatively little capacity for sharp thinking. One has a morally noble disposition, the other a morally lower one. Humanity is a collection of the most uneven individuals. Now, in saying that "the calling of a human being is to be human," I have not yet explicitly addressed this unevenness.

The inequality among human individuals is the natural root of the concepts of *right and duty*.[1]

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1 I mean: *right and duty* in the strict, literal sense of the words — that is, right and duty as they are and remain apart from any feeling of *love*. Love knows no rights or duties in the strict sense. Whoever loves does not ask about the rights and duties of themselves or of the beloved. They only want to *serve* the beloved and to find happiness in the happiness of the one they love.

Because every individual carries within themselves a unique, personal calling—since each has a unique nature—one person is, by natural calling, superior or inferior in relation to another. The one who is intellectually gifted is naturally called to be a teacher to the one who, by nature, finds thinking more difficult or less accurate. The one who is morally noble is called to be a model for the person with a lower moral disposition. The superior calling is a "right"; the inferior is a "duty." The wise person has the natural right to teach; the intellectually less developed person has the natural duty to listen to the wise one, the teacher by nature. The morally noble person has the natural right to serve as an example; the morally less developed person has the natural duty to reflect that example to the best of their own abilities.

The *fundamental* meaning of "right" implies, according to the linguistic sense of all humans, something superior—a moral ability. The *fundamental* meaning of "duty" implies something inferior—a moral necessity. Therefore, it is not entirely correct to say: The wise person is *obliged* to teach. More correct would be: The wise person is *called* to teach, and because this calling implies a moral capacity, they have the *right* to teach. It is therefore incorrect to

say, “The intellectually less-developed person has the *right* to be taught.” What is correct is: “The intellectually less-developed person is called to be taught, and because this calling implies a moral must, he is *obliged* to listen.”

Since it is undoubtedly— even for the least self-seeking person— a happiness to know within oneself a superior calling, one may say that people live for the sake of the superiors, for the sake of the best.

Whoever keeps the fundamental meaning of right and duty clearly in view will understand what Maxim Gorky says in *The Lower Depths* (Act IV):

“People … live for the sake of the best! Take fishmongers, for example— wretched folk— and all at once one is born among them such as the world has never seen before; he surpasses them all, no other fishmonger is his equal. He brings a new vision to the trade, *his* own way of seeing— and in a single stroke he advances the craft by twenty years. And so it is with the others … the locksmiths, the cobblers, and all the other workers, even the peasants and the gentlemen— all live for the benefit of the best! Each one thinks he is in the world for his own pleasure, but

then it suddenly becomes clear that he lives for Him, for the best one. A hundred years, or perhaps longer, they live—until He arrives, the one who surpasses all others."

We live for the sake of the best—not to provide the best with selfish pleasure, but to let them taste the happiness of a superior calling. That happiness of calling is not selfish. A person of high calling is so full of joy that they cannot live without sharing that joy with others. They must live for the happiness of others in order to be happy themselves. In them, altruism and egoism are fully united.

Anarchism, as a doctrine, acknowledges the natural inequality of human callings and the corresponding natural rights and duties. Outsiders are inclined to think that anarchism aims for absolute equality among people, opposing any form of superiority of one person over another. In reality, anarchism recognizes the inequality of people as an undeniable fact of nature. As a system, anarchism indeed seeks for humanity to live "for the sake of the best." But it protests against the inequality that has been *created*,

as it shows us society. Anarchism seeks to reform society into a community of people in which each individual both wants and is able to follow their own calling. And indeed, this anarchist ideal is the ideal of every thinking and sincerely feeling human being. In a community where each individual wants and is able to follow their natural calling, then—despite the immense diversity of human individuals and callings—the most beautiful order would prevail: the order of calling. There would be no other right than the right of natural calling, and no other duty than the duty of natural calling. And when Anarchism tells us that in the great human group we call society, this "order of calling" does not reign, then every thinking being must agree. It's true that in our society, many a Cicero pushes a plow, and many an empty-headed fool preaches from a lectern.

But—how did this disorder arise?

How must it be overcome?

Anarchism replies: Power-based authority is to blame for the lack of natural hierarchy in society. Natural (or true) authority is nothing other than the right that comes with a superior calling. But through *power*-based authority, which

can be acquired or conquered by cunning and violence—without regard for natural calling—it has come to pass that people of inferior calling exercise more influence in society than those of superior calling. Therefore, resist power-based authority. Resist it—"passively," or through "revolt," or through a "general strike"—but resist! Then the order of calling will reign once again; then we will once again "live for the best."

Does Anarchism have a point here too? Must we, as thinking people, not only embrace the anarchist *ideal*, but also accept the anarchist *method*—resistance?

No. We shall see why not.

Power-based authority is one of the many forms of external *force* or *coercion*. Thus, the general inner moral principle applies to power-based authority as well: "Nothing through violence." Morally speaking, power-based authority is in itself nothing—thus neither good nor bad. It *becomes* good or bad depending on the motive that animates it. However, the wrong kind of authoritarian spirit, which rules the whole "world," holds respect for power-based authority *as such*, without examining the motive behind that authority. The "world" praises

kings and emperors—not because noble motives dwell in the hearts of kings or emperors, but simply because they happen to possess great power-based authority. In the same way, the ecclesiastical "world" honors its leaders—not because a prophetic spirit lives in the hearts of those leaders, but because they embody the enormous power of traditional customs and conventional respectability. The essence of the corrupt authoritarian spirit is reverence for power-based authority as such. The authoritarian spirit is, when viewed from an inner moral perspective, unholy, because the morally conscious person has reverence only for good inner motives, for an inner superior calling — which is nothing other than a composition, a "molecule," of good driving forces.

True anarchist propaganda, which does not want to be mere philanthropy—does not aim simply to do good for a particular people or at a particular time—but rather wants to sow motives that will gradually cause the authoritarian spirit to disappear from society, must therefore expect absolutely nothing from external authority; in other words, it must never wish to coerce anyone. Because if it relies—even in the slightest degree—on power-based authority, if it hopes to achieve something through coercion, then it is no longer anarchist

propaganda, but at most philanthropy — protesting against a few disastrous expressions of authority. Can heat be driven out by more heat? Cold by cold? Authority by authority? Force by force?

Look, I truly feel myself to be an anarchist by intention. My ideal is to obey spontaneously only that which is most beautiful, most true; I do not want to be *forced* — and I do not want to *force* anyone. And precisely because of that, I reject anarchist propaganda as we see it in action — campaigning for "revolution," or "general strike," or "resistance," however "passive" that resistance may be. Anarchist movements that want to *force* people — whether rulers or not — are themselves permeated by the authoritarian (archist) spirit. They are not what they claim to be. Their motive is not true — and therefore not good.

Just as there is only one true form of anti-militarist propaganda — which, upon calm and strict moral examination, does not turn out to be militaristic — there is also only one kind of anarchist propaganda that is not itself a form of propaganda by authority. That one propaganda is, once again, the propaganda of Truth. Truth forces no one; *it only lets itself be seen* — nothing more. Those who spread Truth do not force anyone either. They consider any act of coercion in the name of Truth to be an insult done to Truth itself.

A radical improvement of human society is not the violent destruction of one or another external form, but the refinement, the realization, and the purification of the deepest causes from which all external forms of society arise. Those deepest causes, as we know, are the driving forces in the hearts of human beings themselves. The driving force that ultimately disrupts the order of calling does not reside solely in those who seek some position of power in the official world, but in all who strive for influence outside the influence of Truth, for success outside the success of Truth, for fame outside the fame of Truth. This driving force is not external authority itself, but the inner craving to "count" more than one truly is. Even if today all forms of authority were "abolished" or drowned in blood, the craving for display, in all its various phases — lust for power, ambition, maintaining status — would continue to create new, equally tyrannical forms of authority. As long as no refinement comes to the *foundation* of reality, in the realm of the *causes* of society, nothing will have been done for radical improvement.

Do not suspect me now, reader, of wanting to urge you to anything. No, I expect so

little from coercion; I am so anarchistic that I even want to avoid the weakest form of coercion, even "encouragement." I only wanted to show you that simple knowledge of the Truth and straightforward speaking of the Truth are very practical. Yes, the simple truth-knowers and truth-tellers — philosophers and mystics — prove to be the only *radiclly* practical people, from the moment we break with all utilitarianism and ask the radical question: who acts, not for certain people or certain times, but for the *lasting* growth of human happiness? I know well that the names of quiet thinkers are not mentioned as "world reformers." The superficial world will continue to shrug its shoulders at dreamers and visionaries. But aren't the seeds of flowers hidden in the womb of the earth? Aren't the seeds inconspicuous, stripped of all brilliance and power? And yet, no beautiful flowers, and no mighty oaks could grow if there were no inconspicuous, hidden seeds. Thought is a hidden seed germinating at the foundation of the reality of human society. Nothing is so beneficial for humanity, nothing so dangerous for the domination of Caesars, as thought.

Why is Shakespeare's Caesar instinctively afraid of Cassius? Because Cassius thinks — quietly thinks — and does not care about quick, outward success.

"Let me have men about me that are fat;
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights.
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.
. . .
He reads much;
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men.
He loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mocked himself and scorned his spirit
That could be moved to smile at anything." [1]

Cassius has a sacred power within him that makes the lust for power fade: thought. However, he is not consistent because he himself is still power-hungry:

"Such men as he be never at heart's ease,
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves."

Because he was still power-hungry, he did not yet trust thought alone. He organized a political movement against Caesar. Caesar fell — but a new Caesar followed him.

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1 *Julius Caesar*, Act I, Scene 2. Translation by Dr. Willem G. Burgersdijk, a well-known Dutch classicist and translator.

The Cassius type, without ambition for power, is the true anarchist in intention. This person "does" nothing; he sees Truth and speaks Truth. He does not topple princes from their thrones, but he gradually — slowly but surely — *thoughtfully* eliminates ambition for power. He knows well that ambition for power will never completely disappear from the hearts of men; yet complete freedom remains his ideal, and toward achieving that ideal he contributes more than all the men of action combined.

I have mentioned to you repeatedly the *root disease* that causes all harmful outbursts of unjust authority: vanity. The physician of Truth wants to cure the disease—or at least alleviate it—by recognizing it and helping others to recognize it. For him, diagnosis and remedy are one and the same. For illnesses of particular individuals and times, this method is not sufficient. But in the eternal realm of causes, where the happiness and unhappiness of all times are prepared, this method is the only true one.

Therefore, let us end this chapter with a precise diagnosis of vanity.

All humans are born with the disease of vanity. The desire for vanity is one of the many ailments connected to our

tragic failure from birth. [1]

Within ourselves, we carry enough reserve "food" for vanity never to die out completely. We will always feel, more or less, the urge to "matter" more than we really are.

But that vanity grows into an unfortunate mania when it also receives nourishment from outside. That nourishment is not given by just praise, by honestly recognizing true superiority. Just praise is truth. However, truth breeds self-knowledge. Self-knowledge, in turn, moderates vanity.

The food of vanity is: *misrecognition*; misrecognition through false praise, or misrecognition through false blame.

False praise — because we are born somewhat ambitious, we do not reject false praise. We take pleasure in being flattered. And once accustomed to hearing kind words, we do our best to always seem worthy of those kind words. We strive hard not to lose our worthiness of praise. Through false praise, it becomes possible even for mediocre talents

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1 See Sacraments: Baptism.

to walk the path to success — at least for a time. That path to success is broad. But one thing is very difficult: you may not walk upright and confidently on it. At equal, very short distances, there are posts, and on each post hangs a sign that says: "You are urgently requested to keep your head low and only raise it upright in cases of great necessity." On that path, one becomes terribly tired. But success can only be achieved by continuing to walk with your head bowed. — Do you see them crawling, those poor wretches? From time to time, a "friend" brings them a newspaper or a magazine in which kind words are written about them again. Then they warmly shake hands with their friend and say: "You have understood me." And for a moment they sit down by the roadside to rest. But the rest does not last long. For soon a "foe" comes along with a newspaper or magazine. Then they stand up again and stumble forward with bent backs and bowed heads. — Do not be hard on them, fortunate ones, if you cherish your happiness. For they know from experience the power of kind words; they will whisper those words to you, they will lure you to crawl along to support them from time to time. -

Undeserved blame is also a nourishing food

for the innate vanity. Mr. X has given your book a bad review, and from the review you could tell that he hadn't even read it. Mr. Y has disapproved of your behavior, judging by outward appearances, without understanding anything about your inner life. You can't tolerate that. And so you begin to write or speak: "People, listen to me, X is wrong, Y is a slanderer." – And if you are not vastly overestimating your virtues and talents, then you are a hero of Truth, the kind that is born perhaps once in a hundred years.

But if you are not such an extraordinary Truth-hero, then you'll go around pushing it in people's faces or shouting it in their ears until they're utterly bored: "X has terribly misjudged me, Y has disgracefully slandered me. Because I do have writing talent, I am a virtuous person." You're probably clever enough to write it in such a way that people have to read it between the lines, or to say it in such a way that they have to hear it between your words. But you will demand your honor back—with interest! However, you will not get it back, at least not with interest. Then you withdraw to your room, and in gloomy solitude, you project your talents and virtues all around you. How sadly they look at you!

One by one, they come to you like troubled children to their mother. They lay their heads in your lap and look at you with sweet, pleading eyes: oh, just comfort me a little! That awful X., that mean Y. has tormented me so! – I feel sorry for you, poor misunderstood soul! But – you will want to avenge your talent and your virtues, you too will start criticizing, start tearing others down, and the blows of your revenge will be no more just than the blows of X. or Y., who so cruelly pierced your soul. -

I know, reader, that I cannot prove to you as clearly as two times two makes four that my diagnosis of vanity is correct. But go within yourself and reflect on it. Perhaps I have spoken some *truth* about the source of all abuses of authority. And if so, then I hope I have *done* more than all those who, with blaring manifestos or moralizing activist movements, protested against some specific *expressions* of authority.

So here, in short, is my inner moral judgment on Anarchism:

1. The unique calling of each person is inseparable from their unique nature.

2. There are higher and lower callings. A higher calling is *right* in the strict sense

of the word; a lower calling is *duty* in the strict sense of the word.

3. Anarchism acknowledges the inequality of human callings and the corresponding rights and duties that go with them.

4. Anarchism protests against the *manufactured* inequality of people by resisting authority.

5. Resistance to authority, however, is not consistently anarchistic.

6. The pure pursuit of the anarchist ideal—that is, a society in which the order of calling prevails—is the pursuit of seeing the Truth and letting the Truth be seen.

7. Only through this pure pursuit is the root cause of every actual and potential abuse of authority weakened. That cause is the vanity inherent in all of us.

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CAPITALISM.

We already observed in “Monastic Virtues” that money in our society is not only a means of exchange, but also power, and that it has thereby become a source of falsehood. Money is a form of violence, and that is why the moral principle also applies to money: “Everything by right, nothing by force.” Whoever has understood the previous pages will now naturally see that the deepest cause of the lie surrounding money does not lie in money itself, but in the motive to use money in order to deceive. He will also naturally understand that this motive, like all inner motives, cannot simply be “abolished” or “eliminated,” but that it can only slowly and steadily fade away through the pure propagation of Truth. — These thoughts lead us to an inner-moral judgment of the current Socialism, insofar as it preaches the “class struggle.”

I distinguish between Socialism and Socialism, just as I distinguish between Christianity and Christianity.

The idea of Christianity—the ideal Christ-

ianity is expressed in the words of Jesus: “Love God above all and your neighbor as yourself; that is *the* law and *the* prophets.”

Church Christianity, however, as professed by the great mass of those who call themselves Christians, curses—along with Paul—anyone who dares to proclaim a doctrine different from the “Scripture” or the “Ecclesiastical Authority.”

Both the ideal Christianity and the church Christianity exist in reality. The former lives in the striving of all good human hearts; the latter is fixed—not just hidden but *codified*—in official dogmas.

In the same way, I distinguish between Socialism and Socialism.

The socialist idea — the ideal Socialism — speaks in beautiful, proud sayings that socialists write on their banners: Justice for All! Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! Truth! Labor ennobles! etc.

The Socialism as a “party,” which the masses join and which calls itself “socialist,” fights against the owners of capital, organizes workers to empower them against employers, and professes the class struggle.

Both the ideal Socialism and the socialist “party” exist in reality. The

former lives—just like ideal Christianity—in the striving of all good human hearts, at the foundation of reality; the “party,” however, is codified in the dogma of class struggle.

Church Christians deny the name “Christian” to anyone who refuses to bind their ideas to their dogmas. And in that, as churchmen, they are quite right. But anyone who wants to detach their ideas from ecclesiastical dogmas has at least as much right to the inner moral and human honorary title of “Christian” as the strictest dogmatist—provided the idea of Christianity, that is, a fervent love for all that is beautiful and noble, burns in their heart.

In the same way, the socialist party will not recognize anyone as a “member” who does not acknowledge class struggle and uphold it as a means of social reform. And in that, as a party, it is again quite right. But anyone who cannot hope for a lasting increase in human happiness through class struggle—because they feel irresistibly that dogmatic class struggle is *practically* always accompanied by hatred and envy toward the "fortunate ones of this earth"—can have just as much right to the inner, moral, and human honorary title of 'Socialist' as the most fervent party member.

Whoever, without professing the dogma of class struggle, lives by the socialist ideal itself; whoever sincerely strives for the realization of justice for all, for freedom, equality, and brotherhood; whoever above all wants to serve Truth, despises idleness, and honors labor—is indeed a socialist in the deepest sense of the word.

I believe that in my heart I am truly a socialist by intention, and yet I do not profess the socialist dogma of class struggle. And I cannot accept class struggle as a factor in the liberation of humanity, precisely because it conflicts with my deepest socialist convictions. A socialist, in a non-dogmatic sense, is anyone who strives for socialization, for the brotherhood of humanity.
And such a person, if they are consistent in their aims and do not overestimate people, cannot expect any blessing from class struggle. Whoever does not overestimate people — who understands the innate vanity of humanity — knows that power and authority almost always lead to oppression. Likewise, dogmatic class struggle must lead to envy and hatred of one person against another—certainly not factors that promote human brotherhood.

Must the class struggle then be opposed?

I answer: with distinction.

The workers are right, completely right, when they organize themselves against the unchecked power of employers. The employer, as an employer, tries to make money — let the workers, as workers, do the same. That is a form of competition, the same kind of competition that also exists between capitalists themselves. The struggle for competitive advantage is not something noble, but in our capitalist society it is, for most people, a necessary means of obtaining their daily bread. It is therefore sensible that most people engage in this competitive struggle in its various forms, class struggle included. But it is wrong—false and unsocialist—to view this competitive struggle, whether between capitalists among themselves or between workers and employers, as a force of human liberation. Compete, organize, fight where you must in order to secure the basic necessities of life for yourself and your loved ones—see in the class struggle even a philanthropic means of improving the material condition of certain people at certain times—but do not turn class struggle into a party dogma. Do not regard it as a blessing or a force that contributes to the lasting growth of general human happiness. Do not cultivate new hatred, and new envy,

where the plants of love for the future must grow.

The tragic thing about a beautiful idea is always that, precisely because of its beauty, it can be exploited by interested hypocrites. And the danger of exploitation grows when the idea is fixed into a formula, a dogma. For example, the Christian idea of love is wonderful. But precisely for that reason, it can be abused by hypocrites who claim to act out of love. And what has made the misuse of that Christian idea so easy? The Christian dogmas. One only needs to submit to one or another Christian-dogmatic formula to receive the official title of "Christian" from a church community, and then it becomes very easy to cover the meanest intentions with "Christianity."

It is the same with the socialist idea of justice. The idea of "justice" is so wonderful. But precisely because of this, a hypocrite can adorn themselves with it. Add to the idea of justice a party dogma, for example, class struggle, and you have paved broad roads to honor and influence and positions for numerous Pharisees. I believe in the good faith

of many who have preached the class struggle, just as I believe in the good faith of Paul, who cursed the angels if they preached a different gospel than his. But Pharisees do not care about the good faith of brave pioneers. Pharisees speculate on the ignorance of the masses, and sadly, they succeed all too often. "The *robbers* have won," said the dying *revolutionary* Robespierre — and in his words, a large part of human history was expressed.

The danger of ideas being distorted lies even in things much subtler than church or party dogmas, namely, in nice names. Because I seek the Truth to possess it for myself and calmly speak it to others, I will distrust all people throughout my life who boast about nice names.

"Christian" is a nice name, but "Christianity" very often is nothing but churchliness — that is, a low sectarian spirit.

"Anarchist" is a nice name, but one can become an "anarchist" simply because one feels sorry for not being able to be a tyrant.

"Realist" is a nice name, but the "realist" can exploit the filthiness of those who no longer find enough disgust

in ordinary reality, and therefore wallow in their own dirty fantasies.

"Socialist" is a nice name, but loudmouths demanding justice can be "socialists" simply because they see no chance of becoming exploiters themselves.

I wish I could abolish all those nice names. Then we wouldn't so easily forget that the goodness and badness of people can only be found in their intentions.

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SEXUAL ETHICS.

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We have now arrived at the most delicate of all human afflictions: sexual love. As briefly and clearly as possible, I will say what I believe must not be withheld. The most revolutionary slogan of our time—"Away with the old, conventional views on sexual life!"—will touch our hearts. Whether it purifies or corrupts our soul depends on whether we can approach it morally, whether we can form a clear and precise inner moral judgment about it. To ignore that slogan as if it did not concern us at all would be arrogance: nothing is entirely free from its environment, no soul is completely free from the influence of the prevailing slogans of its time. To misunderstand that slogan, to misinterpret it in our hearts, would be very dangerous. Lies about human life are cancer to the soul.

What is ugly, what is immoral, unholy, or harmful in the sexual realm?

From an inner moral standpoint, we can answer in no other way than this: *everything* in sexual life is ugly and unholy that does not grow out of the beautiful, holy intention of love. But *everything* is beautiful and holy that happens as a spontaneous result of genuine love. — That one demand, genuine love, will be set uncompromisingly by anyone who wants to consistently live out the "morality of motives." Any other demand, however, we will call arbitrary.

Now, it is a pleasing development that many progressives in their sexual views place this one demand of true love first. This is encouraging because they thereby show that they seek the true blessing of life in the human heart itself. But on the other hand, I find it sad that they often still set other demands on principle. *Principles*, that is, *outside the welfare of others*. I do not intend to deny that in sexual life one must take into account the welfare of spouse or child. With regard to the welfare of others, for example, sexual partners in the vast majority of cases should enter into a civil marriage. But this has nothing to do with the *principle* of the matter. What I find sad is that even progressives set another demand for the permissibility of the

sexual act *itself* than genuine love. Thus, they depart from the pure, consistent inner morality in order to yield to the immoral rule: the end justifies the means.

How often, even among progressives, is reasoning about the morality of the sexual act mistaken?

They say, "The *purpose* of the sexual act is to conceive a child. Without that purpose, the sexual act is immoral."

It is not difficult to show that this reasoning is not consistently inner-moral. The purpose is something outside of us. The purpose is to be achieved as an object or to produce a product — but it is not an inner motive, not a driving force living within ourselves. It is true that the purpose often closely relates to the motive; it is also true that knowing the purpose of an act often sheds clear light on the nature of the act itself. But it is not true that the purpose itself is inside us, and therefore it is not true that the purpose as such can internally characterize an act. “The end justifies the means” is an immoral principle that we must reject precisely because it is immoral; we must therefore reject it not just in this or that area, but everywhere and always. The purpose may

teach us something about the morality of an action, but the purpose itself never sanctifies or desecrates an action. Only the motive holds the sanctification or desecration of human deeds.

So what then about neo-Malthusianism and homosexuality? This question arises — or will undoubtedly one day confront us — and urgently demands a clear answer. Our principled answer should be obvious: the *intention* behind neo-Malthusian or homosexual acts is the only thing that deserves our *ethical* attention. If that intention is unfeigned love, then the act is good. Another question is whether the intention behind these actions is truly love and not merely selfish sensual desire. This is not an ethical question but a factual one, which we must leave to medical science to resolve. However, the truth of our inner life demands that we do not compromise on our principles and apply the "morality of intentions" everywhere, once we have acknowledged it as truth. I know I am saying things that only a very, very free soul can hear without offense. If you dare to apply inner morality consistently and without hesitation, also to sexual life, then you are truly a wholly inner-moral person.

When I reflect carefully on the motives behind all those "purpose"-based arguments in sexual matters, I increasingly see that they are related to the avenged orthodox Protestant spirit, which does not live by affirmation, but by protest and denial. The orthodox morality of denial keeps repeating its sermons in many churches and many "movements." But all its sermons come down to this: "*Suppress* yourself, *suppress* all that is earthly, for down here it is not good." In contrast, the inner morality says: "*Develop* yourself, *cultivate* all that is earthly, for down here it is good!" Nature teaches us that every fruitful being bears fruit according to its own nature. No matter how one imagines the afterlife, happiness can only grow out of happiness. Surely, happiness also has its birth pangs. But the driving force that overcomes the birth pangs and brings bliss is joy. Our best, purest times are not those in which we plead: "Deliver us, Lord, from all that is earthly!" — but those in which we pray with pure soul-peace: "It is good for us to be here."

It is true that we must control ourselves. But controlling ourselves *for good* is not suppressing. Controlling ourselves for good means knowing, appreciating, and thereby using well.

This is how the scientist masters the laws of nature. He does not suppress those laws; he knows them, he values them, and because of that, they serve him.

No, the force that purifies our sexual life is not denial, not suppression, but positive adoration of Beauty. Sexual morality is identical with sexual aesthetics. What is beautiful is pure. Beauty will not educate us toward legalistic righteousness, to doing what "is allowed" and avoiding what "is forbidden," but it will strengthen us to realize an ideal that cannot be formulated in laws. Adoration of Beauty will, in its weaker form, grant the woman the bliss of being physically beautiful, and the man the bliss of seeing physical beauty. But in its stronger worship, it will make man and woman kneel before something far more beautiful than either of them: a glorious life mission, or the mighty splendor of vast Nature. This is the richness of the ideal: it does not issue a dogma to which many people of different temperaments must submit in the same inert way, but it gives all who see it nourishment for their own spirit. Beauty proclaims itself as Truth. *It reveals itself*—nothing more.

Truth is Beauty. Whoever sees no Beauty in Truth has understood nothing of Truth.

Blessed is the one who sees Beauty. Thrice blessed is the one who can worship Beauty. Their prayer will not be a request for a favor from a gracious God. Their prayer will not be thanks for received gifts. Their prayer will be the language of love from a human soul that knows itself one with another human soul, with birds and flowers—with Nature.

Oh, that I might one day pray:
"Holy Beauty, make me pure!
Holy Beauty, make me strong!
Holy Beauty, make me free!
I will not resist You, You who guide my soul.
I will be obedient to You like a child to its mother. Should not a child be led by its mother? I will be led by You.
I will be obedient to You, Beauty, like a harp to the harpist. The harp allows itself to be played completely as the harpist wills. I let myself be played by You. No unwillingness may reside in the strings of my soul."
I will be obedient, dear Beauty, like a

flower to the sun. The flower lets itself be illuminated by the sun — I let myself be illuminated by You.

I will be obedient, strong Beauty, like the obedient sea before a hurricane. The sea lets its waters splash and foam—it does not resist the winds. So I let my soul be stirred by You, until it boils and bubbles and seethes in storms of enthusiasm. —

There is no more filth in me, for Beauty has nurtured me to pure love.

There is no hiding place in my soul, dark and black to conceal ugliness. For Beauty illuminates my entire being.

There is no cowardly lethargy in my heart, for Beauty drives me forward in the proudest striving.

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AFTERWORD.

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One day, the twelve-year-old Jesus was walking with his mother near the town of Nazareth. His father had recently died. Jesus was sad and said, “Mother, I wish I had lived in the days of Adam, Abraham, and Moses. Now it seems God has abandoned us. He no longer speaks through the mouths of his prophets and no longer performs miracles through the hands of his servants. Isn’t that right, mother? We live in a sad time!”

Mary picked a rose, gave it to her child, and said: “Look, God is here. It is now spring, the voice of the turtle dove is heard in the land, and the blossoms of the grapevines spread divine scents. The date palm, the white rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys are blooming, and they bloom because they are rooted in God. There, in your little garden behind our little house, God is no less present than He was in the great Eden with Adam and Eve. No, God’s oracles have not fallen silent.” See how the setting sun lights up the heavens!

Her purple glow blazes in the West and is reflected in the East. It is God's Word that flames throughout all of Nature, from West to East, in the heavens and on the earth.

Jesus pondered and alternately gazed at the rose in his hand and the distant West. He saw the purple in the sky slowly fading, he saw the moon shining with a gentle glow. Then two young people passed by, who had just become one through marriage. Jesus saw great happiness on their faces and fresh, youthful joy in their eyes, and in a sacred spiritual rapture he exclaimed: "Yes, Mother, now I see it! My Father is working, and I too want to work." From that time on, he began preparing for the glorious task of proclaiming to humanity that God is with them and within them, and remains with them and within them.

I no longer know where I found this legend, but it has become dear to me because it holds a truth broader and more beautiful than many shining facts of "history." It is the soul's history of the human who, in the truest sense of the word, has become religiously free. That human's religious horizon is infinitely wide—it stretches across all of Nature.

But the mother church is not far from the free soul. She is close to it and, like another Mary, offers her mystical flowers, grown from naturally religious soil. The free soul gratefully accepts those flowers and also gives them to sisters and brothers who can appreciate them. There was a time—not so long ago—when those flowers flourished extraordinarily. I mean the "dark" Middle Ages. At that time, the church authorities did not need to guard the supernaturalist cloak of the dogmas so anxiously. Protestantism did not yet exist to watch over their shoulders and force them to tighten the reins of authority, at the risk of losing power. As a result, the life of the mother church could develop more freely in her children than it can now. The mystical literature of that time is full of free, religious life. It is largely a product of the spirit of simple Catholic laypeople; it is colored by dogma but is not afraid to break even dogmatic bonds. The poetry of the Middle Dutch "legends," for example, is free, natural poetry—freer still because it does not boast of its freedom, more beautiful because it does not seek to prove its beauty by outward form. "The form of those stories

is generally very simple, without conscious artistry, but often in their freshness and naturalness full of poetry. The childlike faith and the naive, heartfelt piety of many a legend still hold a peculiar charm for us today when we sit quietly and listen with reverence." [1] Also, the Dutch spiritual song at that time was not so devoid of beauty as one might be inclined to believe when hearing complaints about the "darkness" of the Middle Ages. "We no longer publish Middle Dutch poems out of rarity or curiosity, as if we were miles above their creators; on the contrary, we have grown more and more to admire our medieval ancestors." [2]

After the Reformation, things changed. The poetry of the legend began to wither. "Free adaptations became rare. People clung anxiously to printed texts, preferably in Latin. The language also became stiff and lacked all poetry; it was a true bookish language full of pedantic participles. Compared to the naïve Middle Dutch

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1 Dr. De Voys. *Middle Dutch Legends and Exempla*, p. 11.

2 *Middle Dutch Religious Poetry*. J. Verdam. Reports and Communications of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Department of Literature, 4th Series II, p. 150.

prose, these texts make the same impression as the Beatrijs rhyme by Father Vloers next to the beautiful Middle Dutch verses, or like the tasteless gilded factory-made work with which in the 19th century people thought to decorate churches alongside a characterful, realistically carved medieval statue. [1] And the spiritual song? — "It loses all naivety, all childlike fantasy, all lively cheerfulness." [2] No wonder! The Catholic church authorities had to defend their supernaturalistic authority above all in the struggle against the formidable enemy, Protestantism. The religious Catholic life could no longer develop and express itself freely. The Holy Virgin of Catholic mysticism, the very heart of the mother church, had to conform to formulas it had outgrown. But that Virgin does not die. She will come to us again, radiant with youth, her womb full of blushing roses.

Holy, Catholic Virgin, this is how dearly I love You.

I do not hate You, oh dear Mother Church, I love You more than ever.

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1 Dr. De Voys, ibid., p. 359.

2 Dr. Acquoi. *Spiritual Song in the Netherlands before the Reformation*, Archive for Dutch Church History, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 28.

Let others spatter your clothes with muddy filth—I want to listen to your words of free devotion.

I want to kiss the flowers your hands offer me.

Beloved Mistress, I am not unfaithful to you, as people claim. I sit at your feet and listen, devoutly silent.

But away from me, those who want to silence your voice, deluded in their blind pride.

Away from me, scribes and Pharisees and haters of all that is called God or Religion.

With you I want to dream and to think, to dream away, to think away whatever once kept your wisdom hidden from me.

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